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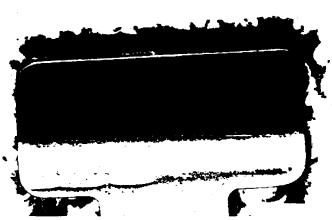

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BROOK CHERITH.

PELOUBET'S

SELECT NOTES

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

FOR

1911.

A History of Israel and Judah

Stories of Great Men from 900 to 300 B.C.

THE BASIS FOR TEACHING ALL GRADES IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL
With all that can aid the teacher in his own study and in teaching such a
Broad Views of the History, Making One Connected Story, Explanations of the Text,
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BY

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PROF. AMOS R. WELLS, A.M.

Thirty-seventh Annual Volume.

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J. L. D. Kendrick

9-16-1932

OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY.

A CHART OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE HISTORY.

EXPLANATIONS. 1. The dates are given according to Prof. Willis J. Beecher in his *Dated Events of the Old Testament History*, the most thorough and scholarly study of the subject including the Assyrian Canon.

2. But for the period of the Divided Kingdom, there is also given the dates as in Hastings' and other Bible Dictionaries, as they interpret the Assyrian Canon, who make the division of the kingdom to begin at various dates from 939 to 931.

3. The Kings, Prophets and most important Events to be remembered are emphasized.

4. Co-reigns, as of Jehoram for 4 years co-regent with Jehoshaphat, are represented by a lighter parallel line.

The Movement of the History.		Five Great Periods.
I. **The United Kingdom.**	Three kings. 120 years, 1102–982.	
II. **The Divided Kingdom.**	Judah. One dynasty. 11 kings, 1 queen.	260 years to 720.
	Israel. Nine dynasties. 19 kings.	
III. **Judah. Alone.**	8 kings, David's dynasty 136 years, 722–586.	
IV. **The Exile.**	70 years, 605–536.	
V. **The Return. The New Nation.**	536–400 and on.	

CHRONOLOGY.

Lesson.	Judah. Prophets. Crises. Kings.	Years of Reigns.	B.C. Beecher	Years of Division	B.C. Hastings	Years of Reigns.	Israel. Kings. Crises. Prophets.
I.	**Rehoboam.**	1	982	1	939	1	**Jeroboam.**
II.	Religious Growth 3 years.	3	980	3	936	3	Introduces Semi-Idolatry.
	Influx of Levites, etc., from Israel.						Exodus to Judah of religious people.
	Invasion of Shishak from Egypt.	5	978	5	934	5	Shishak Monument.
	Decline.						Ahijah.
	Abijam.	17 1 2	965	18	922	18	Shemaiah.
III.	**Asa.** 1	3	962	21	919	21	
	Land at rest 10 years.	2	961	20	918	1 22	**Nadab.** Parts of 2 years.
	War with Israel.	3	960	23	917	2 1	**Baasha.** Civil war with Judah.
	Great Revival and Reformation.	26	947 937	46	894	1 24	**Elah.** Parts of 2 years.
							Zimri. 7 days.
IV.		27	936	47	893	2 1	**Omri.** Great Enlargement of the Kingdom. Moabite Stone.
	Decline.	38	925	58	882	12 1	**Ahab.** Marries Jezebel. Idolatry Introduced.
V.	**Jehoshaphat.** 1	41	921	62	878	5	Religious Persecution. Elijah.
VI.	Wide Extended Revival.						
VII.	Outward Prosperity.	17	905	78	862	21 1	**Ahaziah.** 2 years with Ahab.
VIII.		18	904	79	861	22 2	**Jehoram.**
IX. X.	Decline through Alliance with Jezebel.						
XI.	**Jehoram.** 1 22		900	83	857	5	Elisha.
	4 years as Co-regent. 4 25		897	86	854	8	

Lesson.	JUDAH. Prophets. Crises. Kings.	Years of Reigns.	B.C. Beecher	Years of Division	B. C. Hastings	Years of Reigns.	ISRAEL. Kings. Crises. Prophets.
Second Quarter							
		8	893	90	850	12	
I.	**Ahaziah** (part of 1).	1				1	**Jehu.**
II.	**Athaliah.**	1	892	91	849		
	Temple desecrated. Baal worship.	6					The zealous reformer. Destroys house of Ahab.
III.	**Joash.**	1	886	97	843	7	
IV.	*Temple and its worship restored.*	23	864	119	821	28	
						1	**Jehoahaz.**
		37	850	133	807	15	
						1	**Jehoash.**
		39	848	135		17	Co-regnant 3 years in addition.
		40	847	136		3	
						1	Moabites invade Israel.
	Amaziah.	1	846	137	803	2	
	Defeated by Israel.	14	833	150		15	Defeats Amaziah of Judah.
	Nominal ruler under suzerainty of Israel.	15	832	151	804		
						1	**Jeroboam II.**
							Jonah (?).
	Death of Amaziah.	29	817	166		16	Becomes suzerain of all peoples from Mediterranean to Euphrates.
	Interregnum for 11 years.						
VI.	**Uzziah.** Also called Azariah.	1	806	177	801	27	Amos. Hosea (?).
	Amos.	15	792	191		41	Death of Jeroboam.
							Interregnum for 22 years.
		38	769	214	763		**Zechariah** (6 mos.).
	Leprosy of Uzziah (?).	39	768	215	763		**Shallum** (1 mo.).
	Jotham regent 13 years.	40	767	216	762	1	**Menahem.**
	Eclipse of Sun by which Assyrian dates determined. June 15, 763 B.C.	44	763	220			Hosea (?).
						5	
		50	757	226	752	10	
VII.	Isaiah early prophecies.	52	755	228	750	1	**Pekahiah.**
	Jotham.	1	754	229	749	1	**Pekah.**
						2	
	Invasion by Israel and by Rezin of Damascus.	15	740	243		16	Successful invasion of Judah
		16	741	244		17	with Rezin of Damascus.
	Ahaz.	1	738	245	741	18	
	Tributary to Assyria.	3	736	247		20	Deportation by Tiglath-pilezer.
IX.	Micah.						
X.	Hosea in Israel, close of his work, 735.	13	726	257	730	1	**Hoshea** becomes king.
XI.	**Hezekiah.**	16 } 1 }	723	260	727		Taylor Cylinder.
	Isaiah later prophecies. Great Passover of Hezekiah.	2	722	261		5	First siege and capture of Samaria.
		4	720	263		7	**Fall of Samaria** by Assyria.
XII.		6	718	265	722	9	End of Kingdom of Israel.
Third Quarter							
I.	Invasions of Sennacherib.	14	710	273			
		19	705	278			Death of Sargon and Accession of Sennacherib in Assyria.
		23	701	282			
II.		29	695	288			
III.	**Manasseh.**	1	694	289			Esarhaddon 676.
	Death of Isaiah. Tribute to Assyria.						

Authorities are practically agreed on these dates.

Lesson.	JUDAH. Prophets. Crises. Kings.	Years of Reigns.	DATES. B. C. Beecher	Years of Division	B. C. Hastings	EVENTS. Contemporaneous History.
	Manasseh carried to Babylon.	47	648	335		
	Return and reformation.	48	647	336		
	Nahum.					
IV.	**Amon.**	1 55	640	343		
		2	639	344		
V.	**Josiah.**	1	638	345		
	Zephaniah.	8	631	352		Legislation of Draco at Athens.
VI.	Jeremiah begins prophecy.	13	626			626 Scythian invasion.
	Josiah's great reformation begun.	17	622	361		
	Book of the Law Found. Reformation Passover.	18	621	363		
		31	608	373		Expedition of Pharaoh Necho.
	Jehoahaz (3 mos.).	1	607	376		
VII.	**Jehoiakim.**					606 Destruction of Nineveh.
VIII.	Beginning of first captivity.	3, 4	605	378		Daniel and others taken to Babylon.
	Habakkuk.					
		11	597	386		The great deportation of Jews.
	Jehoiachin (3 mos.)					
IX.	**Zedekiah.**	1	596	387		
	Beginning of second captivity.					
XI.	Daniel.					Legislation of Solon at Athens.
XII.	Ezekiel.					
	Temple Destroyed.					
	Beginning of Third Captivity.	11	586	397		

Fourth Quarter

First Captivity, 605
I. **Second Captivity, 597**
II. **Third Captivity and Temple Destroyed, 586**

70 Years.

The Seventy Years of Exile foretold by Jeremiah.

537, 6 **First Return.**

516 **Second Temple Completed.**

		539	444		Cyrus takes Babylon.
	First year of Cyrus.	538	445		Cyrus' decree for the return.
III.	**First Return.** 50,000 under Zerubbabel.	537, 6	446,7		Cyrus Cylinder.
IV.	Foundations of Temple laid.	535	448		
	Haggai. Long delay.				
	Zechariah.				
	Building of Temple resumed.	520	463		
	Second Temple Completed.	516	467		
V.	(A Psalm.)	490	493		Battle of Marathon.
		486	497		Accession of Xerxes (Ahasuerus).
		480	503		Thermopylæ and Salamis.
VI.	Esther becomes Queen.	479	504		
VII.	**Second Return,** under Ezra.	458	525		Herodotus.
IX.					Pericles. Plato.
X.	Return under Nehemiah.	444	539		Socrates. Xenophon.
XI.	Jerusalem rebuilt.				
XII.	Malachi. Reforms.				
XIII.		336	647		
		323	660		Reign of Alexander the Great.
	Judea Annexed to Egypt.	318	665		
		223	760		Accession of Antiochus the Great.
	Judea Annexed to Syria.	198	785		
		175	808		Accession of Antiochus Epiphanes.
	Antiochus massacres Jews.	170	813		
	The **Maccabees** lead Jews to revolt.	167	816		
	Judea under Roman Power.	63	920		
		43	940		*Herod* governor of all Syria.
	Herod takes Jerusalem and is *de facto* king of Judea.	40	943		**Herod** king of the Jews under Rome.
		37	946		
		31	952		Beginning of Roman Empire.

Authorities are practically agreed on these dates.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE HISTORY.

THE PERIOD with which our lessons for this year are concerned, extends from the division of the kingdom after the close of Solomon's reign, B.C. 982 or 939, to the end of the Old Testament History, B.C. 400; about 5½ centuries. See the Chart.

THE GOAL of Old Testament History is thus seen to be the Kingdom of Heaven founded by Jesus Christ, and its final consummation in the redeemed world.

And we can understand this history only so far as we continually recognize this goal. A wise man has said that "the first requisite in the steersman of a state, as of a ship, is a knowledge of its goal. No helmsman however skilled or experienced, would be trusted to guide a vessel unless he knew and could specify in what direction it should go."

In this history "through the ages one increasing purpose runs." And everyone who would know the meaning of the Old Testament must trace this purpose all through his studies. This will guide him to the truth, will show him the underlying principles, will solve many difficulties, will make the story fascinatingly attractive.

THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THE END PROPOSED was by selecting one people for special training; that through them the truth and blessing might reach the other nations. The others had such truth as they were willing to receive, but this nation, imperfect as it was, was yet the most receptive of the good influences, and most responsive to training. Its method of development may be compared to that of the Christian church in the world since the coming of Christ.

THE PROBLEM worked out through the Old Testament story, was to train this chosen or selected nation to be fitted to receive and extend the kingdom of God, and be prepared for the coming Messiah, — a very difficult work.

Very much was accomplished by the United Kingdom; but with the closing years of Solomon and his idolatrous wives, and his degenerate son and successor, the experiment was so much of a failure that a new plan must be tried.

HENCE THE DIVIDED KINGDOM for more than two centuries. One part would react on the other, and through two experiments one or the other people might be worthy to be entrusted with the true religion.

We are to study throughout this year the dealings of God with these peoples, and the means he used to make them what they ought to be, and to save them from the tragedy of disobedience. He put obstacles in their downward path in order to make the way of transgressors hard, to stop their downward careers, and to turn their steps into the way of life.

He prospered them that his goodness might lead them to repentance; he punished them, he gave them prophet after prophet, he wrought wonders on Carmel for their reformation, he let the fierce Jehu destroy the idolatrous family who were ruining the nation, he sent lesser catastrophes and minor punishments that they might be persuaded to obey him, he gave peace. But the northern kingdom utterly refused, and its destruction came like a whirlwind B.C. 722.

With THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH the training continued a century and a third longer, about as long as the United States has been a nation.

There was no little gain during these years, but the time came when another kind of discipline was necessary in order to preserve the kingdom of God on earth.

THE EXILE, for 70 years in Babylon, of the main body of influential citizens, was a severe but wholesome discipline, and cured the nation of its most destructive errors. "It was a great disaster, but it also proved to her an incomparable blessing" and made the development of the kingdom of God possible.

THE RETURN, AND THE ONE SELECTED NATION. Judah had been cut down like an oak or chestnut, leaving only the stump in Palestine; but by the Return there sprang up a new shoot, as is the habit of those trees, — which was to grow for five centuries till it bloomed into the kingdom of Christ.

SACRED AND SECULAR HISTORY. God has not left his world, and he is still guiding and controlling history toward the goal of a redeemed world.

But there is this difference between the modern histories and Bible History, — the Bible history is written from the Religious standpoint, and is history interpreted by the inspiration of God.

Hence by its study we find the great underlying principles of God's dealings with man, and can apply them to modern times, as the light which can guide us toward the true goal.

LIGHT ON GOD'S STRANGE DEALINGS WITH MAN. There are two sources of light on the moral perplexities which will continually arise in reading the Bible history. The first source of light comes from the nature of virtue itself. It cannot be forced upon man. The moment a man is compelled to do right, that right act is not a virtue. The regularity, the promptness, the temperance, the industry of the inmates of a state prison, do not prove the prisoners to be virtuous. There must be freedom of choice in order to cultivate moral character. The Israelites were permitted to do things that ought not to be done, as the means, under every good influence, of disciplining them to better things.

THE OTHER SOURCE OF LIGHT is to realize that the history is one of development, of evolution with God behind it and in it, an evolution not so much of the standard of right, as of the people's comprehension of it, and of their gradual growth up to it. This explains many moral difficulties. Our judgment of persons and of actions must take account of their age and circumstances.

WHAT THE TEACHER CAN DO to make these lessons attractive and helpful to the young.

1. While there are in these lessons sins, crimes and sufferings, wars, punishments, failures, — yet always they are viewed from the redemptive, curative standpoint; they are calls to a better life; the eyes are looking upward, to ideals and hopes.

2. READ ALOUD the whole section of the lesson. Read it as a dialogue, different members of the class taking the characters. For this purpose selections must be made of the most dramatic parts, and of the stories, and one person can read the connecting parts. One who has not tried this reading aloud can scarcely imagine the added interest and insight it gives.

3. BRING TOGETHER not only the whole story belonging to the lesson, but also the story as told in the parallel accounts; — Kings and Chronicles should both be read.

4. REFERENCES to the events of the lesson from other portions of the Scriptures, from secular history, from literature, from parallel characters or events ancient or modern, will illustrate and make all more real.

5. Each scholar, or at least each class, should make a Lesson Book, using sheets of paper or one of Wilde's books made for the purpose. In this should be pictures illustrating the lesson; a condensed story of the lesson; the names of noted persons, the place in the movement of the History of Israel; and the most important teaching of the lesson. To this may be added pictures from any source illustrating any portion of the lesson.

6. HOME WORK. An occasional evening meeting at the home of the Teacher or of some of the scholars, can be made very effective, not only for better acquaintance, but for work on the lesson books, collection of pictures, stereoscopic views, making illustrative objects.

7. APPLICATIONS. The most interesting as well as useful part of the lesson is the application of its underlying principles to the problems and needs of the daily life of our scholars. They can see how others lived the teachings, and by this lamp guide their own lives.

They can see the rocks on which other voyagers on the sea of life were wrecked, and steer away from them.

They can see the hand of God in these other lives, and thus realize the providence of God in their own lives.

THE BOOK OF KINGS.

1. First and second Kings are two parts of one book, in two volumes, or rolls, for convenience in using in the synagogue services. Originally they were one book. There is in them unity of purpose, unity of language, and unity of history, with no break between them.

2. THE PERIOD of the history extends over more than 400 years.

3. THEY ARE COMPILATIONS of extracts from more copious annals. The author cites three of these sources: "The Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 Kings 11: 41), "The Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" (1 Kings 14: 29, etc.), and "The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (1 Kings 14: 19, etc.). The sections containing the lives of Elijah and Elisha were probably drawn from some biography of these men.

4. THE AUTHOR is unknown. It is quite possible that there was an earlier edition, revised by some later author.

5. DATE OF COMPOSITION. On the face of the records the date appears to be during the exile, not earlier than 562 B.C., the date of the latest event recorded, the liberation of King Jehoiachin, nor later than 536 B.C., the date of the return from the exile, to which there is no reference. Dr. Robertson in the *Temple Bible* thinks that the books were written while Judah was still in existence, not long before the exile, with a few editorial additions of a later date.

6. DIVISIONS. The history divides itself naturally into three periods: (1) the united kingdom; (2) the divided kingdom; (3) the surviving kingdom of Judah, after the destruction of the northern kingdom.

7. THE OBJECT OF THE BOOK, is not to make a complete history, but to use the history to enforce religious truths, and inspire and urge the nation to that moral and holy life which would make them true representatives of the kingdom of God. It is History divinely interpreted, which fact gives its importance to-day over every other history.

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

THE TITLE. The Hebrew title is "Acts of Days," the record of "Events of Times." The Greek Septuagint calls the work the *Paraleipomena*, "Things Omitted" from the other historical books.

THE FORM. The two books of Chronicles formed one continuous work. Some think Ezra and Nehemiah were included in this compilation, but they are very different in style and character.

THE AUTHOR is unknown.

THE DATE of writing is implied from internal evidence to be about 350 B.C. Driver and Hastings place the date about 300 B.C.

SOURCES. More sources are given for the materials of Chronicles than for any other book of the Bible, — Samuel, Kings, state annals, called Book of the Chronicles of the Kings, the Chronicles, or Last Words or Acts of David, a series of prophetic monographs of Nathan, Samuel, Gad, Ahijah, Iddo, Jehu, Isaiah.

ITS PURPOSE. Chronicles was written long after the end of the kingdom of Israel, when there was only one nation of Jews, who were in trying times morally as well as in outward circumstances. The book was therefore largely confined to the story of their ancestors of the Southern Kingdom. Its purpose was to inspire the restored exiles with the principles by which alone the nation could prosper, and encourage them in faithfulness to God, and to walk in the ways of religion, morals, happiness, and peace.

ITS HISTORICAL STATEMENTS are not, on this account, unreliable; and its statements should be used to modify the theories of the religious development of the Jews, rather than to discredit the truth of the history, as is sometimes done.

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The Expositor's Bible. (Armstrong, $1.50 a volume.)

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The Biblical Encyclopedia, a revised and enlarged edition of Gray's "Biblical Museum," by Rev. Geo. M. Adams, D.D. Vols. i–iii. (F. M. Barton, Cleveland, Ohio. $2.00 a volume. Third Edition, 1906.)

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An American Commentary on the Old Testament. 1904 (The American Baptist Publication Society).

Expositions of Holy Scripture, by Alexander Maclaren, D.D., Litt.D. Published in Series of 6 vols. each. (Pilgrim Press, $7.50 the Series.)

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Dramatic Studies from the Bible, by Emma T. Eaton. In attractive form, with photogravure frontispiece. Includes only Esther, of these lessons. (Pilgrim Press, 75 cts.)

Henry Altemus Company, Philadelphia, publish two series of small books neatly gotten up: *Illustrated Children of the Bible Series*, and *Illustrated Beautiful Stories Series*. 25 cts. each. On the period of the lessons are vol. ix. of the first series and vols. viii. and ix. of the second.

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Two Years in Palestine and Syria, by Margaret Thomas. (Scribner's, $5.00.)

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The Poet's Bible, selected and edited by W. Garrett Horder, Old Testament Section, 1895 (Ward, Locke & Bowden, London, $1.25).

The City of Jerusalem, by Col. C. R. Conder, LL.D. (Murray, 12s. net.)

Life in the Homeric Age, by Thomas Day Seymour, Hillhouse Professor of Greek in Yale University. This being about the same period as the early part of the Hebrew Monarchy is interesting for illustration and comparison. (Macmillan, $4.00.)

Old Testament Miracles in the Light of the Gospel, by A. Allen Brockington, M.A. 1907 (Scribner's, $1.25 net).

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The Religion of Israel in the Seventh Century, B.C., by Prof. Geo. Adam Smith, 1910.

Jerusalem from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70, by Prof. Geo. Adam Smith. 2 vols., 1908, with 13 excellent maps and plans, and 13 finely executed plates. Good indexes. Thoroughly good work, and up to date. 1908 (Armstrong, $7.50).

Ancient Jerusalem, by Hon. Selah Merrill, for many years U. S. Consul at Jerusalem, and a personal investigator. 48 illustrations, and many charts and plans. Good indexes. 1908 (Revell, $6.00).

Jerusalem in Bible Times, by Prof. Lewis B. Paton, an archeological handbook for travelers and students. 169 pages. 66 plans and illustrations. Good indexes. 1908 (University of Chicago Press, $1.00).

Prof. Geo. Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* stands without a peer on this subject. It has accurate and beautiful maps, of large size. (Armstrong, $4.00.)

RECENT BIBLE DICTIONARIES.

The Dictionary of the Bible. Edited by James Hastings, D.D. Complete in one volume. 992 pages, 7½ by 5¼ inches. No illustrations and proper names not pronounced. Three colored maps in the text, two of them fine, large double-paged. Full discussions. 1909 (Scribner's, $6.00).

The Standard Bible Dictionary. 920 pages, 8½ by 5½ inches. Somewhat larger and clearer type than the other dictionaries. 460 unusually good explanatory illustrations. Proper names pronounced by respelling. 9 colored maps and 23 plain maps and plans scattered throughout the text. Thumb index. Summaries of the articles. 1909 (Funk & Wagnalls, $6.00).

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY. 975 pages, 7¼ by 4½ inches. 365 excellent illustrations. Pronunciation of proper names so far as to mark the accented syllables, 13 colored and 23 plain maps, in text. The long articles printed in two solid columns. 1908 (Dutton, $5.00).

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THE SEVENTH CYCLE OF LESSONS, 1912–1917.

1912.	New Testament.	Life of Christ. Synoptic Gospels. (Based chiefly on Mark.)
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Lesson 14.

Review.

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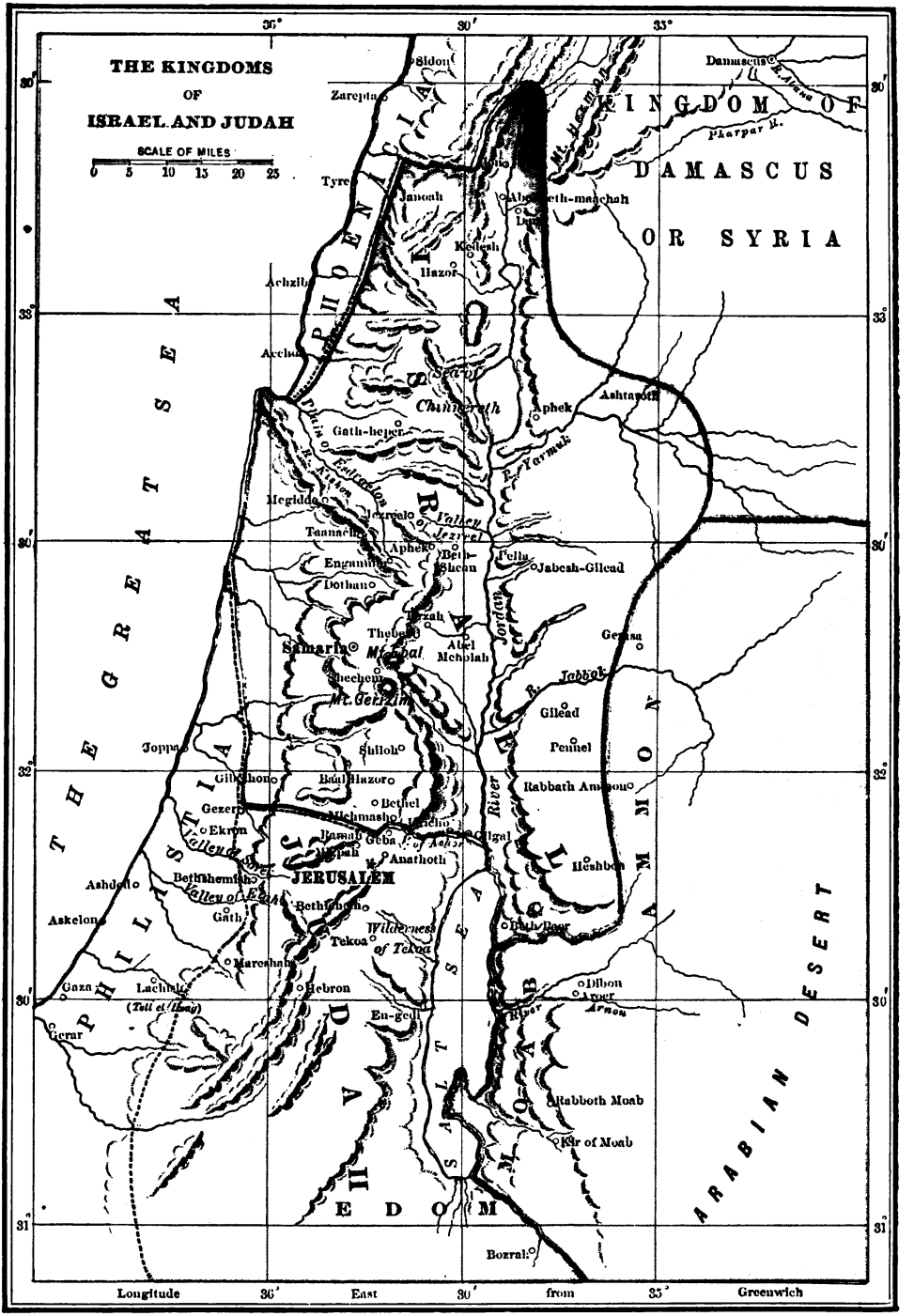

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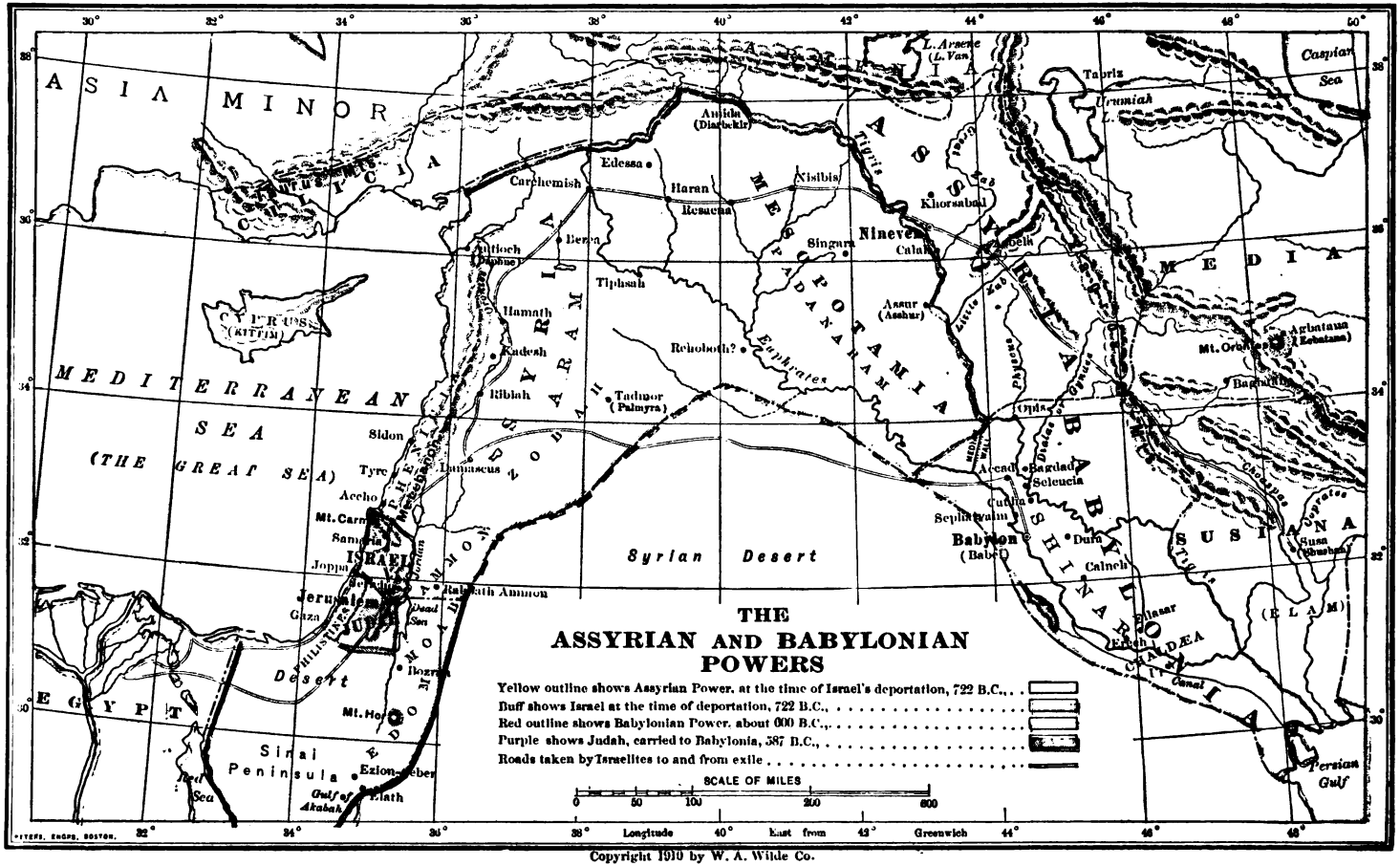

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Watering-Place on the River Nile.

FIRST QUARTER, 1911—JANUARY 1 to MARCH 26.

LESSON I. — January 1.

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED.—1 Kings 12: 1–24.

PRINT vs. 6–16. READ 1 Kings 11 : 26–40; 14 : 21–31. COMMIT vs. 13, 14.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*** — PROV. 13: 20.

Bible Readings in Their Natural Dialogue Form.

Not only in this lesson, but in many of the other narratives studied during the year, a vividness of impression and an intense interest are imparted by their being read in character by different persons. Those who have not tried this plan will be surprised at the effect when "these narratives live again in all the strength which the revelation of personality gives to the story."

The readers should be persons with as good voices as the school affords, but not necessarily trained readers. They should stand on or near the platform. The passages should be plainly marked. The introductions to the words of each speaker should be omitted, as the speaker's presence is sufficient, and the dialogue is more natural and dramatic. The *Narrator* furnishes the setting of the dialogue. When a number speak, as "the old men," and "the people" in this lesson, two or three persons should read in concert. This can be done in a class room, as well as in the main school. I know a teacher of small boys who does it with great interest and success.

In this lesson the dramatic scene would be thus:

Narrator.	Vs. 1–3.	*The Old Men.*	V. 7.	*Rehoboam.*	V. 14.
The People.	V. 4.	*Narrator.*	V. 8.	*Narrator.*	Vs. 15, 16, f.c.
Rehoboam.	V. 5.	*Rehoboam.*	V. 9.	*The People.*	V. 16.
Narrator.	V. 5, l.c.; v. 6, f.c.	*The Young Men.*	Vs. 10, 11.	*Narrator.*	V. 16, l.c.
Rehoboam.	V. 6, l.c.	*Narrator.*	Vs. 12, 13, 14, f.c.		

The Chronology.—1. In adding up the figures given in Kings and Chronicles, we find variations of a number of years; and the Assyrian dates vary 40 or 50 years from these.

2. But there are several satisfactory schemes of reconciliation.

3. It is not probable that any historian would make contradictory statements in a continuous history.

4. On the whole I prefer Professor Beecher's dates as the most thorough and reliable.

5. To these are added the dates given in

Hastings' Bible Dictionary, based on a comparison of the Scripture with the Assyrian dates. But the schemes thus based on the Assyrian vary from 2 to 8 years.

6. The question of exact dates is of little importance to the study of these lessons, except that they must give the proportions of the connected history; and avoid giving the impression of unreliability in the history.

THE BOOK OF KINGS.

See Introduction, and chart of Chronology.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time of Solomon's death and the division of the Kingdom, B.C. 982 (Beecher) or perhaps B.C. 939 (Hastings). Beecher's is very near that given in the margins of our Bibles.

Place. — Rehoboam's capital was at Jerusalem. The disruption occurred at Shechem, which was the first capital of the northern kingdom, and the metropolis of Ephraim. It was 30 miles directly north of Jerusalem between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. Here were located incidents in the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Joshua. Close by, doubtless as a part of the larger town, were Jacob's well and Sychar where Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman. And there is now the seat of the Samaritans, the smallest religious sect in the world, about 170 in number.

Place in the History. — A new era in the development of the people of God. The beginning of two lines of development, training and experiment, instead of one.

From a Photograph.
Samaritan High Priest.
Jacob, Son of Aaron
Who addressed the World's Sunday School Convention at Jerusalem, in 1904.

LEARN BY HEART.

Prov. 3: 1–4; 15: 1.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character of Rehoboam.
The condition of the kingdom when he took it.
Rehoboam's opportunity.
A comparison of the two kingdoms, as to size, people, dangers from without, religious life.
The necessity of the division for the training of the people in religion.
Cause of Rehoboam's failure.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Adō′răm, Ahī′jah, Jĕrŏbō′ăm, Nā′ămah, Nē′băt, Phā′raōh (Phā′rō), Rēhŏbō′ăm, Shē′chĕm (ch = k), Shĕmā′ĭăh, Shī′lŏnīte, Shī′shăk, Zĕrū′ăh.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Rehoboam, the Young Man Who Lost a Kingdom.

I. REHOBOAM, THE HEIR TO A KINGDOM.
   His training and character.
II. THE KINGDOM HE INHERITED.
   Size, splendor, possibilities, dangers.
III. HOW HE LOST THE KINGDOM (vs. 1–16).
   Wise counsel, foolish counsel, the fool's choice.
IV. INSTRUCTIVE INCIDENTS IN REHOBOAM'S REIGN.

THE CHILDREN'S LESSON BOOKS.

Put in a map, and draw the line which divided the tribes.

Write the story of Rehoboam.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The One Volume Bible Commentary (Macmillan, 1909). *The New Century Bible*, "Kings" (Oxford, 1909). *The*

Hebrew Monarchy, a harmony of the parallel texts (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896). Professor Kent's *The Divided Kingdom* is especially good on this lesson (Scribner's, 1897). Farrar's *First Kings* in the *Expositor's Bible*.

Monuments. — On the wall of a temple at Karnak, Egypt, is an inscription which gives a list of towns subjugated by Shishak on his expedition. See Sayce's *Side-Lights on Bible History*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

The story of the French Revolution, caused by the treatment of the people by the kings and nobles. So Charles I and Cromwell.

Fuller's *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*, "Scripture Observations," No. VIII.

Francis Quarles' *Divine Fancies*, ii.: 34 has a curious poem on Rehoboam. See *Poet's Bible*, p. 455.

Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse*, "The Story of Rappacini's Daughter."

Side-Lights on Scripture Texts, by Francis Jacox, ch. xiv. on "The Measure and Pressure of Rehoboam's Little Finger" has many illustrations from history and literature. (Hodder & Stoughton).

Shakespeare's *Henry IV.*

THE LESSON IN ART.

Rehoboam, by Michelangelo.

Division of Kingdom, Von Schnorr. (In catalogue of S. S. Commission, N. Y.)

THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

The Story of Rehoboam and How He Lost a Kingdom. The Story of a Reckless, Untrained, Conceited Young Man, and His Coming Into the Real Business of His Life.

I. **Rehoboam, the Heir to a Throne.** HIS NAME means "Enlarger of the people," expressing the hope of his father for his son. The son disappointed these hopes, and became the "Diminisher of his people." Alas for such boys to-day!

HIS AGE on becoming king was probably 21 years. In 1 Kings 14: 21 his age is given as 41. But this is probably an error of some copyist, which could easily be made, since 41 in Hebrew is מא differing very slightly from כא = 21 as some manuscripts read. In 2 Chron. 13: 7, he is represented as "young and tender-hearted" at this time, and his whole conduct is more like that of a petulant youth, than of a mature man. Even if he were 41 years old, he still was untrained, and carried his youthful traits into his manhood years.

HIS PARENTS. His father was Solomon, but in the latter half of his reign, when in the height of his prosperity, and the early stages of his moral decline. His mother was Na'amah, a young heathen princess of the kingdom of Ammon on the borders of the desert east of the Jordan. She was one of the many wives of Solomon by means of whom he made alliances with the surrounding nations; and she was so attractive that for her sake he built on Olivet, opposite the Temple, a sanctuary in which she could worship her horrible and cruel national god Molech.

HIS TRAINING. Rehoboam was doubtless, according to the Eastern custom, brought up in the harem, and his father was probably too busy with his kingdom to pay much attention to him.

"Such a home where interests clashed and rivalries flourished like mildew in a damp cellar, where co-wives and no-wives and half-brothers and sisters were struggling each for his or her own interests, was a very unfortunate place to rear children."

Rehoboam's mother would naturally bring up her young boy in her own idolatrous and vicious religion. As the son of a favorite princess he would be waited on, petted, flattered, courted, treated as a superior being, whose will should never be checked, nor fancy thwarted; with no regular business, no hard tasks, a heathen religion, and wild companions.

On the other hand, the Temple of the true religion was close by, always within sight, and he must often as a young man have wandered near it or within its courts. His father's early life, and his grandfather David's character and achievements would draw him toward better things, and open the door of opportunity to a better life. "There was a touch of gold in the base metal."

HIS CHARACTER. That he was a young man of fair natural abilities is shown by his conduct during the first three years of his reign. As a son of such parents he was probably a handsome young man. But morally, he was a fool; as Ben Sira says: "Ample in foolish-

ness and lacking in understanding;" proud, selfish, overbearing, insolent, overweeningly conceited, and narrow. It has been said that "Solomon had a thousand wives, but only one son, and he was a fool." Even the wisest man cannot bequeath his wisdom to his children. Much of what we are we owe to our mothers and the home atmosphere they create. A grateful people has erected monuments to the mothers of Washington and Lincoln. Rehoboam's ruin was his mother's monument. "It has been said that 'every great man is the son of his mother.' The same remark might be made of every great fool."

"I have seen wicked men and fools, a great many of both; and I believe they both get paid in the end; but the fools first." — *Stevenson* in *Kidnapped.*

HIMSELF TO BLAME. But after all the course Rehoboam took depended on his own choice. The Will is the king of the soul, of the life. What a man chooses that he will become. "Heaven is to steer; hell is to drift."

Some one says: "Boys will be boys;" he forgot to add, "Boys will be men," and it depends on themselves, what kind of men.

"We shape ourselves the joy or fear
Of which the coming life is made,
And fill our future atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade.

"The tissue of the life to be
We weave in colors all our own,
And in the field of destiny
We reap what we have sown."

"And do you know that noble poem, 'Opportunity' — the story of the man who could have fought bravely if he had had a better sword, and the king's son who picked up the poor, broken fragment that the grumbler had thrown away, and with it fought so successfully that he turned defeat into victory?"

"Not your environment makes you but *that part* of your environment *to which you attend* makes you."

One of the first things boys ought to learn is the reason why they have so many temptations, so many "thou shalt nots," "not smoke," "not swear," "not drink," etc., is that they may have the opportunity to overcome, to be manly.

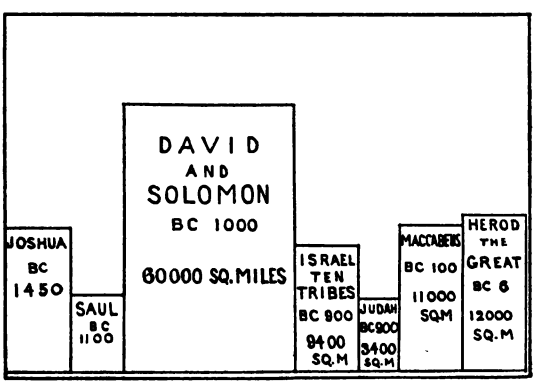
"All who would become strong and useful must gain their power largely through victory over temptation. It is thus that the soul 'builds itself larger mansions.' It is a chief factor in education, transmuting the baser metal of each individual into the nobler."

"No one ever became a great commander in time of peace."

"When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet — both tug —
. . . the soul wakes
And grows."

"Was the trial sore?
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time." — *Browning.*

ILLUSTRATION. Prof. Henry Drummond has written a charming story for boys, called *Baxter's Second Innings* (35 cents), using the English game of cricket as text.—"We are talking of the game of Life. Life is simply a cricket match with Temptation as a Bowler. He's the fellow that takes every boy's wicket some time or other. You see every boy has three wickets to defend. The first is Duty, the second is Honor, the third Unselfishness. I am going to tell you about Bowling. As in bowling Temptation has three kinds of balls for knocking down those three wickets,— swifts, slows, screws."



Read the book or carry out for yourself the analogy.

II. The Kingdom Rehoboam Inherited. SIZE OF THE KINGDOM. Solomon's kingdom extended from the Euphrates on the north to the boundary line of Egypt on the southwest, including the whole

strip of territory lying between the desert on the east and south, and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, except the narrow strip occupied by the Phœnicians, who were in alliance with Solomon.

The Home Country. The twelve tribes occupied a country having only about 13,000 square miles (*Kiepert*), — about the size of Holland, or of Massachusetts and Connecticut together. But Solomon also ruled over a large extent of neighboring territory, so that his entire kingdom covered about 60,000 square miles, about the size of England and Wales, a little less than all New England, and larger than Denmark, Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland together.

THE TEMPLE was a splendid building with its courts, its magnificent ceremonials, representing to the world the glory of Jehovah and his religion.

THE SPLENDOR OF ITS BUILDINGS. Jerusalem was made into a magnificent city. The palace was a wonder of architecture. Waterworks brought supplies to the city through costly aqueducts requiring no small engineering skill. Great fortresses protected the country. The Tower of David, near the House of the Forest, shone with a glory beyond that of any other fortress, from the number and variety of its glittering ornaments. Five hundred golden bucklers, all shields of mighty men, hung round it (1 Kings 10: 16, 17; 2 Chron. 9: 15, 16).

ITS COMMERCE was widely extended. Its ships sailed as far west as Spain, perhaps beyond along the coast of France to the British Isles, southward along the African shore, probably to the gold coast, down the Red Sea, along the shores of Arabia and Eastern Africa, and the Persian Gulf, and, without doubt, to some part of India. There was inland commerce with Egypt, and caravans across the Arabian desert (1 Kings 9: 26–28; 10: 22; 2 Chron. 8: 17, 18; 9: 21).

WEALTH. Gold was accumulated in great abundance and "the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycomore trees that are in the lowland, for abundance" (1 Kings 10: 27). His revenues amounted to 666 talents of gold, annually, or ten to twenty million dollars.

THE POSSIBILITIES of a good and wise king, sincerely devoted to the kingdom of God, were very great. He might have made his kingdom a lighthouse of truth and religion for the whole world.

But it would be absolutely necessary for him to make some essential changes, for there were with these opportunities

CERTAIN DEADLY INFLUENCES, worms at the root of the tree, deadly diseases in the body politic, hidden fires that were secretly destroying these mighty "forests of Lebanon."

1. The entrance of debasing heathen religions, and consequent deterioration of the people in morals and religion.

2. The wealth belonged to the kings and nobles, and the common people gained very little advantage from it. Such an unequal distribution was an injury in the Republic of God.

3. The burdening of the people with forced labor stung them with injustice, and burnt out the feeling of patriotism, and set men against the religion that allowed it.

4. The allied countries under Solomon were ready to fall off from the empire, like ripe fruit, under an inefficient king, and become enemies instead of allies and friends, and the divided kingdom would be weakened for resistance.

5. The northern tribes were jealous of the southern. They had the best country, but the capital and the temple were in the south with their manifold attractions. The seeds of division had been planted long before, and were now growing rapidly.

III. **How Rehoboam Lost His Kingdom.** — Vs. 1–16. Rehoboam seems to have been the natural heir to the throne. Judah accepted him. But as in the case of Saul, David, and Solomon, at least in Jerusalem, the people had a voice in the selection of their king. Accordingly the tribes were summoned to meet at the old northern capital, Shechem, to confirm the successor of Solomon. The northern tribes were determined to obtain a charter of rights that would relieve them of their burdens, as the price of their submission. For Solomon had forced them to give their unpaid labor upon his great buildings, and these free and independent Ephraimites were reminded of their ancestors' slavery in Egypt. They were shrewd enough to send for their brilliant sympathizer, Jeroboam, whom Solomon had banished to Egypt. They were ready to enforce their just demands.

Rehoboam, apparently attended by a small force (*Kent*), goes to confer with them. Jeroboam is their spokesman, and this is the condition on which they will receive him as king:

"Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee."

6. And king Rē-ho-bō'am consulted took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may saying, What counsel give ye me to answer return answer to this people?

7. And they spake unto him, saying, [1] If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

8. But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and consulted took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, and which that stood before him:

9. And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which that thy father did put upon us lighter?

10. And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say speak unto them, My little finger shall be finger is thicker than my father's loins.

11. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

[1] 2 Chron. 10: 7; Prov. 15: 1.

Rehoboam asking for three days in which to consider and to consult, applied first to the older men who had been his father's councilors.

THE OLD MEN'S ADVICE. **7. Be a servant unto this people . . . and speak good words to them.** Be what every good king ought to be, and grant their reasonable request. A true king or ruler is one who serves. The elder men who had seen Solomon in all his glory, told Rehoboam how he might be greater than his father. True greatness is measured by the power and the will to serve.

"So far as you desire to possess rather than to give; so far as you look for power to command instead of to bless; . . . so long as the hope before you is for supremacy instead of love; and your desire is to be greatest instead of least, — first instead of last, — so long you are serving the Lord of all that is last, and least; the last enemy that shall be destroyed — Death; and you shall have death's crown, with the worm coiled within it; and death's wages, with the worm feeding on them." — From *Ruskin's* last words in his *Modern Painters*.

ILLUSTRATION. Lately (1909) the Japanese government has decorated the ex-president of Harvard, and my friend Rev. J. H. DeForest, missionary to Japan, with the ORDER OF THE RISING SUN. The older men offered Rehoboam, for himself and for his nation, THE ORDER OF THE RISING SUN.

THE YOUNG MEN'S ADVICE. Rehoboam next consulted the young men, his comrades, those who had "grown up with him," inexperienced, like himself. The cynical, overbearing advice they gave shows that these youths belonged to what Kitto calls "the *Jeunesse dorée*, the gilded youth, the aristocratic idlers," who had no sympathy with the people, but were wild, reckless, conceited, and overbearing in their utter selfishness. The people were made for the king. They believed,

> "Truly the only tongue that is understood by a savage
> Must be the tongue of fire that speaks from the mouth of the cannon."

and

> "Terror alone can tie Rebellion's hand."

They gave their advice not only because they believed it, but also because they knew it agreed with Rehoboam's wishes. Their advice was (vs. 10, 11),

"**My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.**"

12. So Jĕr-o-bō'am and all the people came to Rē-ho-bō'am the third day, as the king [had appointed, bade,] saying, Come to me again the third day.

13. And the king answered the people [a] roughly, and forsook the [old men's counsel that they gave] counsel of the old men which they had given him;

14. [And and] spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, [and but] I will add to your yoke: my father [also] chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15. [Wherefore So] the king hearkened not unto the people; for [1 the cause was it was a thing brought about of] the LORD, that he might [perform his saying, establish his word,] which the LORD [2] spake by [the hand of] A-hī'jah the Shī'lo-nīte [unto to] Jĕr-o-bō'am the son of Nē'băt.

16. [So And] when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, [3] What portion have we in David? neither [have we have we] inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

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[1] V. 24; Judg. 14: 4; 2 Chron. 10: 15; 22: 7; 25: 20.
[2] 1 Kings 11: 11, 31.
[3] 2 Sam. 20: 1.
[a] Heb., *hardly.*

"Solomon's girdle would not go around Rehoboam's little finger."

Whips, used in enforcing such forced labor as Solomon exacted under the lash.

Scorpions. "Thongs thickly set with sharp iron points, or flints," "so that each blow might wound like a scorpion's sting."

Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie of Syria tells in *The Sunday School Times* of an Arab warrior who was punished by living scorpions upon his person in prison.

A Hungarian traveler describes his experience when stung by a scorpion. It was as if "a hundred poisoned needles had run into his leg, a burning and stinging pain like a stream of fire from the tips of his toes to the top of his head."

REHOBOAM'S ANSWER to the people was given in the words of the young men, their figures of speech expressing the bitterness of the slavery he would inflict on them.

13. **The king answered the people roughly.** One of the most foolish things he could do. "Rough words do one of two things, they wound or they madden.

"Friends, fortunes, and kingdoms, have all been lost by speaking rough words, and gained by speaking kind ones. The Persian Saadi said 'by using soft words you may lead an elephant with a hair.'" — *S. S. Times.*

"Experience teaches fools, we say. It ought to, but really it teaches everybody but fools." — *Hugh Black* in *The Gift of Influence.*

THE KINGDOM LOST. 16. **All Israel saw that the king hearkened not.** Josephus says that "they were struck by his words as by an iron rod." **What portion have we in David?** What have we of the northern tribes to do with David's son, Rehoboam, or David's tribe, Judah? **To your tents, O Israel.** Back to your homes, and prepare for war. This cry — the *Marseillaise* of Israel — was an old war-cry of Ephraim. **Now see to thine own house, David.** Look after your own tribe of Judah, Rehoboam, for that is all you will have left.

REHOBOAM TEACHES YOUNG MEN SOME LESSONS FROM HIS EXPERIENCE.

Kipling sings:

"If only myself could talk to myself
As I knew him a year ago,
I could tell him a lot,
That would save him a lot,
Of things he ought to know."

1. *Every young man has a kingdom in his own soul.* He may throw it away — half of it or all of it, in the same way Rehoboam did, foolishly following his headstrong will. Or, he may take the advice of wise men and the Bible, and become monarch of all the royal possibilities God has placed in his life.

2. *One's character, already formed, is a powerful factor in all emergencies of choice and decision.* There is no time to prepare a new character. Rehoboam had formed the habit of taking bad advice when it fitted his inclination, and so he took it at his life's crisis. A fire, a railroad accident, a shipwreck, a battle, bring out the real natures of men, just as an unexpected visit discloses good or poor housekeeping.

3. *The only way to be ready for the great choices is to choose wisely in small affairs.* Be patient in little trials, and you will be patient under great provocation. Be faithful in little duties, and you will be faithful in great emergencies. When God would write the state papers of the universe, he chooses a pen that has written well the humdrum business letters.

From a Photograph by Bonfils.

Fallen Columns of the Temple at Karnak, in Egypt, on which is a Record of Shishak's Conquests.

4. *We do not need to make our decisions unaided.* Our first duty and privilege is to go to God for help. But to obtain his help we must go sincerely, really wanting to know and do his will. Otherwise the asking is hypocrisy and a sham.

5. *Pride in the form of self-conceit is "the one assailable stupidity."* "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

He might well have listened to Woolsey's despairing cry,—

> "I charge thee, fling away ambition!
> By that sin fell the angels."

6. *On taking advice.* "You may disregard advice, but listen to it.

"Many a fool has helped a wise man. Even the worst advice presents one side of a question.

"An astute man said that he always wanted advice, not to follow it, but to help him make up his mind. If you once get this idea about it you will be much the gainer in the battle of life. No one person can present all the points of view, and a person about to take an important step should be able to know what is all around the horizon."

IV. **Instructive Incidents in Rehoboam's Reign.**—1 Kings 12: 21–25; 14: 21–31. Rehoboam reigned 17 years.

FIRST. HIS VAIN ATTEMPT TO RECOVER HIS LOSS. On his return to Jerusalem Rehoboam assembled an army of 180,000 men to compel the seceding tribes to return. But a prophet forbade the movement in the name of the Lord. To go on would be to fight against God, and therefore bring only disaster to the whole nation, weaken both parties, and expose them all to the ravages of the surrounding nations, who, as it was, fell away from their alliance with the Israelites. Rehoboam had no experience in war or in governing. A small kingdom was quite sufficient for such a man. Even David was king for seven years over Judah and Benjamin, before he ruled the larger kingdom. Rehoboam obeyed the letter rather than the spirit of the command, for during his whole reign and long after there was a guerilla war between the kingdoms, like the border raids between the Scottish Highlanders and Lowlanders, and the 100 years' war between England and France.

SECOND. THERE WERE THREE YEARS OF PROSPERITY AND TRUE RELIGION.—2 Chron. 11: 16, 17.

(1) Many of the best people of the northern kingdom, "such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel" came to Jerusalem, and strengthened the kingdom of Judah and made Rehoboam strong three years (2 Chron. 11: 13–17). Among them were the priests and Levites from all parts of Israel, who had been dismissed from their offices by Jeroboam.

(2) Rehoboam fortified fifteen cities, furnished them with soldiers and supplies, "and made them exceeding strong."

NOTE in this the effect of Rehoboam's failure and disappointment as one of the influences God used to bring him to his senses, and aid him to a better life.

NOTE also how God used his kindness and bounty, as a motive to persuade the king to

keep his commandments and live his religion; as if he had said, — Here is a specimen of what I will do for you, if you will forsake your evil ways, and rule your kingdom in the fear of God.

COMPARE the change in Prince Henry, who with Falstaff had been committing "the oldest sins in the newest kind of ways." As soon as he became King Henry V. he put away all the vile companions of his youth:

> "I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,
> So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;
> But, being awake, I do despise my dream.
> For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
> That I have turn'd away my former self;
> So will I those that kept me company."

Falstaff did not believe in the king's sudden change, but "a mere color" to "seem thus to the world." He was mistaken.

Would that Rehoboam had changed like Henry V. and the history of Israel would have been changed.

THIRD. DETERIORATION. Rehoboam's goodness was but the early cloud and the morning dew. As soon as he was firmly established, he returned to his old ways, and "forsook the law of the Lord." The deterioration of his character and his kingdom was symbolized by the change from the shields of gold which Solomon had made for his palace armory, but which Shishak took away, and which Rehoboam replaced by shields of brass (1 Kings 14: 26).

FOURTH. PUNISHMENT. 2 Chron. 12: 1-12. This deterioration continued two years, when God used another instrumentality for making Rehoboam good. In his fifth year Shishak, the Pharaoh of Egypt, came up with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen, and an uncounted number of common soldiers. They captured the cities of Judah, devastated the country, and carried away the treasures Solomon had stored in the Temple and in his palace, and the golden shields in his armory. Shishak left an inscription on the walls of Karnak in Egypt giving an account of this invasion. The prophet Shemaiah interpreted the meaning of this calamity; and king and princes humbled themselves, confessed their sins, and promised to do better.

The Lord therefore delivered them. Rehoboam continued to reign; and though his kingdom was not destroyed yet it was far from what it might have been, for "he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

The Principles of God's Dealings with His People in the Past Shining Down on the Things of To-Day. God's principles are everlasting, but the forms of their application vary with every variation of circumstances.

1. Professor Pazurek, director of the beautiful museum at Stuttgart has formed a contrasting division, called the Museum of Bad Taste, containing "Horrible Examples"; "Art Indiscretions;" "Plagiarisms," that is imitations, as wood painted to imitate stones, or glass imitations of jewels; "Monstrosities of Taste." These are warnings.

What is there in our lives, our conduct, that in the future will go into the contrasting division of the Museum of Virtues? And what is there we will wish to have blotted out forever?

2. As patriots, what is there in our country, that we wish to have go down the ages as a blessing? and what is there that we should give our whole soul to changing or blotting out?

Dr. Frank Gunsaulus of Chicago in his piece of fiction, "Monk and Knight," has this declaration: "True statesmanship consists in discovering the way in which God is going, and getting things out of the way for him."

From Temple at Karnak.

Head of Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt.

LESSON II. — January 8.

JEROBOAM MAKES IDOLS FOR ISRAEL TO WORSHIP.

1 Kings 12: 25—13: 6.

PRINT 12: 26-33. COMMIT vs. 28-30. READ 1 Kings 12, 13, and 2 Chronicles 13.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.* — Ex. 20: 4.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS

In our last lesson we studied the story of a Wild, Reckless Young Man, Entering upon his Life Work. To-day we study the story of an Unprincipled Business Man of Great Ability, Entering upon the Great Work of his Life.

Have the scholars decide what real success would have been for a king, — as to people, government, happiness, religion, business, education.

Call out from them, what he must do and be to gain this success.

Use Jeroboam, as an illustration of what is taking place to-day.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Bĕth'ĕl; Eph'răim; Esdrăē'lŏn; Jĕrŏ-bō'ăm; Lē'vites; Nē'băt; Pĕnū'ĕl; Rĕhŏ-bō'ăm; Shē'chĕm (ch=k); Zĕrū'ăh.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jeroboam reigned 22 years from B.C. 982 [(Beecher) or 939 (H.)], the date of the Disruption, to 961. Parts of a year are always treated as a year.

Place. — The Disruption took place at Shechem, between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. He built up this town and made it his capital.

The two religious centers or capitals were (1) *Bethel*, 12 miles northwest of Jerusalem, and not many miles from the boundaries of the two kingdoms. It was an ancient place of worship (Gen. 12: 8; 28: 19; 35: 1-15). (2) *Dan* was in the extreme north, also an ancient seat of worship.

Bethel on the line of travel was admirably located to intercept pilgrims to the feasts who would otherwise have gone on to Jerusalem.

Place in the History. — The beginning of the northern kingdom, and of the introduction of a debased and idolatrous worship.

LEARN BY HEART.

The second commandment; Isa. 40: 28-31.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Jeroboam. History and character.
The size and resources of the two kingdoms.
In what way was the Disruption *from the Lord*?
What danger did Jeroboam fear for his kingdom?
By what plans did he seek to avert it?
Was the worship of the "calves" idolatry?
How was this plan the ruin rather than the safety of the nation?
Name the forms which idolatry takes in our day.

THE CHILD'S LESSON BOOK OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

Map Study. — By means of a colored map, or of a raised map, mark the tribes which joined each kingdom, and note advantages and disadvantages of each.

Put in Pictures of the Golden Calves from Assyria, and of the Taj Mahal of India, built by forced labor.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Story of Jeroboam, and the Founding of the Kingdom of Israel.

I. HOW THE DISRUPTION WAS FROM THE LORD.

II. JEROBOAM THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL.

III. JEROBOAM'S OPPORTUNITY.

IV. WHAT JEROBOAM DID WITH HIS OPPORTUNITY (vs. 25-33).

He strengthened his fortifications.
He introduced idolatry under the guise of the true religion.

SEEING OURSELVES IN AN ANCIENT MIRROR.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

On this lesson Wood's *The Hebrew Monarchy* is excellent.

Joseph Parker's *People's Bible* has a brief but illuminating chapter on the "Sin of Jeroboam."

Kent's *The Divided Kingdom* gives the best statement comparing the resources, advantages and disadvantages of the two kingdoms.

THE LESSON IN ART.

*Jeroboam's calf-worship rebuked.**

* In Wilde's Bible pictures.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, Book I., refers to "The calf in Horeb," and to "the rebel king" who "Doubled that sin in Bethel and in Dan, Likening his Maker to the grazèd ox." Shakespeare, Wolsey's exhortation to Cromwell, *Henry VIII.*, act III., scene 2, "I charge thee, fling away ambition! By that sin fell the angels." Trench's poem, "Mahmoud, the Idol-Breaker." Ruskin on the essence of idolatry, in *Stones of Venice*, vol. II., Appendix 10. Whittier's "Moloch in State Street."

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

The Story of Jeroboam the Shrewd but Unprincipled Business King.

I. How the Disruption of David's Great and Prosperous Kingdom Was from the Lord. — 1 Kings 12: 15, 24. If only the people had been good enough, obedient to God, and united in his service, one strong united kingdom would have been the best for building up the kingdom of heaven on earth, safe from all enemies. It would have been like Greece, Rome, England. But when the people were unwilling to obey, the Second Best was the Best that could be given them. *God always does the best thing possible for each nation and for each individual.* If they are disobedient and wicked, he cannot wisely do for them what he would if they were obedient and good. Therefore, he does what is best for them as they are, and what will most tend to make them what they ought to be.

THEREFORE those things which show that under the circumstances the division of the kingdom was the best for the kingdom of God, show why *it was from the Lord.*

FIRST. The disruption broke off nearly all those alliances with heathen nations through which the kingdom of Solomon had been corrupted into idolatry. "The mighty tide of foreign customs and civilization was turned backward." — *Kent.*

SECOND. Each kingdom was better for the separation, since they would not unite in peace. A forced unity is the prolific mother of discords and troubles. A formal unity with real division of heart brings warfare, where separation can leave both parties in peace. The intensely worldly Ephraimites would doubtless have corrupted the more religious but imperfect Judahites.

THIRD. The better elements, those most devoted to the worship of Jehovah were concentrated in Judah (2 Chron. 11: 16, 17). "Such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah." Thus a strong atmosphere of religion aided the kingdom of Judah, and showed itself in several revivals and reformations, of which there were almost none in the northern kingdom.

FOURTH. Thus there were two experiments, two lines of training, and increased hope that one at least would be true. Each of the two kingdoms could learn by the experience of the other, and see clearly in the other what it might fail to see in itself, the fact that success depended on obedience, and failure was the result of disobedience.

FIFTH. The kingdom which was to inherit the promises to Abraham and to David was thus defended by the northern kingdom both from the attack and from the vices and idolatries of the surrounding nations. There was no way in which they could be easily approached except through the northern kingdom. The nature of the country, its very rocky barrenness, trained the people to hardiness and self-reliance, while the city life added its power to this training.

"Rough, bleak, and hard, our little State
Is scant of soil, of limits strait;
Her yellow sands are sands alone,
Her only mines are ice and stone.

"Yet on her rocks, and on her sands,
And wintry hills, the schoolhouse stands,
And what her rugged soil denies
The harvest of the mind supplies"
— *Whittier, "Our State."*

The separation and the smallness of the southern kingdom preserved it from too great a tendency to commercialism in its religion. For the sanctuaries, like the Temple in Christ's time, would tend to become great markets on festival days; and the worldly spirit of traffic and gain would detract from the religious life and power. "The possibility of their becoming a great world-power was forever destroyed." That was not their mission. Till the people have become perfect there must be a separation of church and state. No politics in religion, but religion in politics, leavening them with morality and justice and love.

SIXTH. We can understand this movement better if we have vividly before us the circumstances and the problem.

The Jews were the only nation in the whole world that was not steeped in idolatry and its immoralities and cruelties.

The purpose of God was and is to transform the world into the kingdom of heaven. From the Jews the Christ was to be born the Messiah-Redeemer of the world.

The problem in these early ages was how to accomplish this purpose. And God did it by selecting one nation, with the inheritance of many saintly ancestors, and training its people to realize an unseen, but infinite and holy God, and to obey his righteous laws. The business of this nation was to be a light to the world, by teaching the truth, by living the righteous life, and exemplifying the blessing God bestows on those who obey him. God will not force them to be good, for forced virtue is no virtue at all, and gives no real training in goodness; but he uses every possible influence over them. It is this process of training which explains this lesson, and all the dealings of God with his people, which we are to study during this year.

II. **Jeroboam the First King of the Northern Kingdom.**—Jeroboam belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. He was born at Zer'ĕda in the Jordan Valley. His father's name was Nebat (1 Kings 11: 26), and his mother was Zerū'ah.

He was one of the common people, as distinguished from Rehoboam of the royal family and son of one of the greatest monarchs the world has known. He was a man of great ability, a self-made man like so many of the greatest men in history. So marked as a controller of men, of such business capacity and energy, did he show himself in his work on Millo a fortress of Jerusalem, that Solomon placed him at the head of the forced labor bands of the northern tribes.

Thus Jeroboam became acquainted with the needs and harsh, unjust treatment of the people, just as David did during his 7 years of exile during the reign of Saul. Thus he had a splendid opportunity for training in true kingship.

Jasper Seal of King Jeroboam's Officer.

Found in 1903 in the ruins of Megiddo, 25 miles north of Shechem. The motto on it is "Belonging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam."

Another preparation for his life work was the announcement to him by the prophet Ahijah that the Lord God of Israel had chosen him to be king of ten tribes. The prophet impressed this upon him by an object lesson. He tore his new garment into twelve pieces, and gave Jeroboam ten of them, giving as a reason that Solomon was leading the nation into idolatry, and promising him that he and his family should be the permanent reigning family, *provided* "thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments as David my servant did" (1 Kings 11: 38).

Jeroboam made the mistake (contrary to the example of David with respect to King Saul), of taking the matter into his own hands, and starting a rebellion against Solomon. But Solomon quickly put an end to that scheme, and Jeroboam escaped into Egypt, where it is said that he married the daughter of Shishak the king who afterwards invaded Judah. The announcement was made in order that Jeroboam might be prepared for the time when God's providence opened the way. Moses made a similar mistake when he began the deliverance of his people by killing an Egyptian in defence of one of his countrymen. He had to wait 40 years before the time came.

But in both cases the mistake was over-ruled for good.

A MIRROR IN WHICH THE YOUNG SHOULD SEE THEIR OWN LIVES. Dr. Bushnell, in his famous sermon, has well said: "Every human soul has a complete and perfect plan

cherished for it in the heart of God,— a divine biography marked out. This life, rightly unfolded, will be a complete and beautiful whole, an experience led on by God, and unfolded by his secret nurture as trees and flowers by the secret nurture of the world; a drama cast in the mould of a perfect art; a divine study that shall forever unfold, in wondrous beauty, the love and faithfulness of God; great in its conception, great in the divine skill by which it is shaped; above all, great in the momentous and glorious issues it prepares."

One of the greatest blessings is the assurance that we are living the life and doing the work that God has planned for our lives; that we are weaving the life-picture for which God himself has drawn the pattern.

We can with our free wills spoil God's proposed plan for us if we will, can put evil where he put good, demons instead of angels, flames of remorse instead of the light of Paradise, — as Jeroboam did. The only wise way is to live the life God would have us live, as pictured in his Word.

III. **Jeroboam's Opportunity.** — (1) THE COUNTRY over which he was chosen to rule was about twice as large as Judah, almost 9,400 square miles, nearly as large as New Hampshire, a little larger than Massachusetts.

Its natural resources were far greater than those of Judah. It was well watered, with a rich and fertile soil adapted to orchards and grainfields, "a land flowing with milk and honey."

"Its territory contained most of the famous places of the nation's past history, and most of its greatest heroes, men and women, belonged to the northern tribes." — *Farrar.*

The people were energetic, freedom-loving, independent, with possibilities of commerce and wealth; which things are blessings provided the people are good enough to make the right use of them as the instruments of righteousness and good deeds.

At the same time there were dangers from luxury, and from the attractions of wealth which exposed the people to the incursions of the surrounding nations.

The danger was greatly increased by the fascinations of the worldly people around them, and of the licentious orgies with which idols were worshiped.

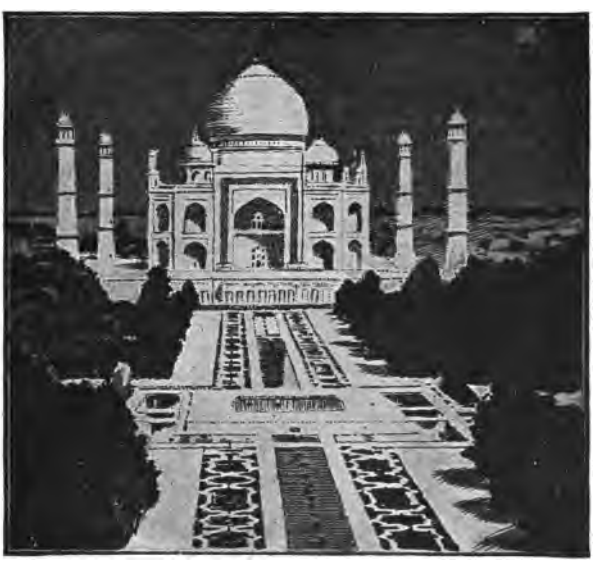
There was little natural unity in a nation of such varied circumstances and pursuits, and influences from different races of people around them. There was no natural capital, or center of religious life.

Thus there was abundant opportunity for the most wise, skilful, able and unselfish ruler to exert all his abilities.

(2) Jeroboam could SO ADMINISTER HIS KINGDOM as to do away with the wrongs and oppressions which were the cause of disruption.

It is hard for us to realize the greatness of the oppression, almost slavery, by which Solomon had been able to erect his great palaces, and fortresses, and buildings which made his kingdom seem so glorious.

ILLUSTRATION. At the time I was writing this lesson, Dr. F. E. Clark and a large number of Christian Endeavorers were on the way to India to attend the World's Convention of that marvelous organization. It was held at Agra the last of November, 1909. Here is the Taj Mahal, "which is perhaps the climax of all architectural ele-



Taj Mahal, Agra, India.

25. Then Jĕr-o-bō'am [1] built Shē'chem in the hill country of E'phră-ĭm, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built [2] Pe-nū'el.

26. And Jĕr-o-bō'am said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:

27. If this people [3] go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rē-ho-bō'am king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rē-ho-bō'am king of Judah.

[1] Judg. 9: 45. [2] Judg. 8: 17. [3] Deut. 12: 5, 6

gance and magnificence in that, if not in all, lands. Men have vainly lavished words upon it in their endeavor to describe it. It has been called 'a dream in marble,' 'a poem in marble' and 'the most symmetrical, the most perfect, perhaps the only faultless human structure in existence.' Built of rich white marble, it is most impressive, not only because of its delicate beauty, but also owing to its colossal size." *It took 20,000 unpaid laborers twenty-two years to build it.* They were forced by the emperor to work for only food and clothes. How little that was can be seen by the fact that 1,000 natives of India went to that Convention walking three or four days each way, and boarding the 3 days of the Convention, for 50 cents each, including a new suit of clothes.

(3) Jeroboam's opportunity lay in THE CONDITION GOD LAID DOWN, that he must obey God, keep his commandments and uphold the true religion, if he would succeed. There was no hope of success in any other way, from the very nature of things. A religion that inspired obedience to God, alone could unite the people, alone could keep them from the vices and corruption which are the sources of degeneration and ruin.

"Never by lapse of time,
The soul defaced by crime
Into its former self returns again;
For every guilty deed
Holds in itself the seed
Of retribution and undying pain."
— *Longfellow's Masque of Pandora.*

God's laws are all made to work out good for man. This is true of natural laws and moral laws. They can work good only to those who obey them. They must by their very nature destroy those who resist and disobey, and no person can stop this result any more than a grasshopper can stop a mowing machine; he must either get out of the way or be destroyed.

IV. **What Jeroboam Did with His Opportunity.** — Vs. 25–33. FIRST. He wisely strengthened the defences of his kingdom.

25. Built Shechem. Changed it from a small town to a strong and beautiful city, making it a worthy capital for his new kingdom by fortifying it and adding palaces and other public buildings. It was specially adapted for the capital because (1) it was centrally located, and (2) in the midst of his own tribe, which (3) was the most powerful of the ten tribes; and (4) its age, sacred character, and historic associations, gave it dignity. **Mount Ephraim**, R.V., "the hill country of Ephraim." **And went out from thence.** Having established his capital, he transferred his workmen to another scene of operations. **And built.** Strengthened and enlarged; Gideon had destroyed its fort (Judg. 8: 17). **Penuel** ("anciently called Peniel." — *Cook*). The name, which means "face of God," was given it because here Jacob wrestled with the angel of God (Gen. 32: 24–32). Penuel was on the River Jabbok in Gilead, east of the Jordan. Jeroboam fortified it for protection from Assyria on the northeast, and Judah on the south, and also from the desert tribes of the east. It was on the great caravan road which went through Damascus to the Euphrates and the East.

SECOND. Jeroboam in his desire to retain his kingdom adopted a plan which would destroy its very foundations, and make it a house built on the sand and not on the rock. He was a politician, i.e. one who seeks his own welfare first; not a statesman, who makes his country's good supreme. He trusted his own wisdom, and proposed to succeed by defying God's conditions of success when he offered him the kingdom. It was the story of Adam and Eve repeated.

"The key of yesterday
I threw away;
And now, too late,
Before to-morrow's close-locked gate
Helpless I stand — in vain to pray!
In vain to sorrow!
Only the key of yesterday
Unlocks to-morrow." — *Priscilla Leonard.*

THE DANGER JEROBOAM FEARED. Vs. 26, 27. **He said in his heart.** His real secret motive, unpublished to the people. He feared that he would lose his kingdom, and

28. Whereupon the king took counsel, and [1] made two calves of gold, and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: [2] behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29. And he set the one in [3] Bethel, and the other put he in [4] Dan.

[1] 2 Kings 10: 29. [3] Gen. 28: 19.
[2] Ex. 32: 4, 8. [4] Judg. 18: 29.

the two be united under Rehoboam, if his people should go up to Jerusalem to attend the annual Jewish feasts prescribed by the law of God (Deut. 16: 16); that unity of religion would lead to unity of state. **27. And they shall kill me.** To get him out of the way so that the two kingdoms might be more readily united, and also to win favor with his enemy, Rehoboam.

He had also the excuse that Rehoboam was a bad man, and a cruel oppressor. If the two kingdoms should unite under him, they would lose all they had gained by the revolt.

WAS JEROBOAM'S FEAR WELL GROUNDED? To be sure, a single religion for the two kingdoms, with one priesthood, and Jerusalem the common sanctuary, would constantly tend toward union; but it would not necessarily mean political union, any more than the religious supremacy of Rome and the pope over the Catholics means political union for France and Italy or Mexico and Central America. The unity of religion would tend toward peace, instead of the long wars which followed the disruption. It would also have prevented the exodus from Jeroboam's kingdom of his most religious people, which caused an irreparable weakening of the morals of his kingdom. Resting on the promise of God, and obeying him, would have been worth a thousand such plans as Jeroboam proposed, and would have prevented him from "going to the moral rubbish heap."

Winged Bull of Assyria.

JEROBOAM'S PLAN. **28. Made two calves of gold.** "They were probably of considerable size, and represented a young but full-grown bull." The Hebrews were familiar with figures of bulls, and "the most conspicuous object in the courts of Solomon's temple was its molten sea, supported on the backs of twelve bulls." — *Farrar.* The ox-symbol of God was most natural for an agricultural people, for whom the great animal, so powerful yet so docile, was the bread-winner, a material embodiment of the divine strength and beneficence. **Of gold.** Not solid, but "a wooden core overlaid with gold." — *Hastings' Bible Dictionary.* Thus Solomon made the cherubim of the temple (1 Kings 6: 23, 28), and Aaron his golden calf.

Behold thy gods, O Israel. There were two images, but they represented one God. ("God" in the Hebrew is a plural word, expressing the manifoldness of his nature.) The intention was to worship the same God, Jehovah, whom they had always worshiped. The new worship was to be a continuance of the old under new forms and in new places. "Jeroboam never dreamed of apostatizing from Jehovah." The two "calves" represented Jehovah **which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.** These were not meant to be substitutes for God, but emblems, symbols, visible expressions of God.

29. And he set the one in Bethel, near the southern border of the kingdom. **And the other put he in Dan,** an ancient place of heathen worship near the northern extremity of the kingdom.

30. And this thing became [1] a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, even unto Dan.

31. And he made an [2] house of high places, [3] and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

32. And Jĕr-o-bō'am ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto [4] the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar: so did he in Bethel, [a] sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: [5] and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

33. So he offered upon And he went up unto the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had [6] devised of his own heart: and he ordained a feast unto for the children of Israel: and he offered upon went up unto the altar, and to burn [7] burnt incense.

[1] 1 Kings 13: 34.
[2] 1 Kings 13: 32.
[3] Num. 3: 10; 1 Kings 13: 33; 2 Kings 17: 32.
[4] Lev. 23: 33; Num. 29: 12; 1 Kings 8: 2, 5.
[5] Amos 7: 13.
[6] Num. 15: 39.
[7] 1 Kings 13: 1.
[a] Or, *to sacrifice.*

30. And this thing became a sin. The doing this was a sin, and a means of sin. Jeroboam "pandered to the rude and sensuous instinct which makes materialism in worship so much more attractive, to all weak minds, than spirituality." The tendency was to idolatry, with all its attractive vices. It prevented the people from realizing the true God. **For the people,** following the lead of their sinful king, **went to worship before the one** (R.V. margin, "before each of them"), **even unto Dan.**

THE FIRST STEP, therefore, downward in idolatry, was the actual *worship* of these images, and not of God through the mere aid of the symbols. The educated Hindu will plead that his myriad idols are only helps to understand the one God; but the vast majority of the people never look beyond the senseless images which they worship.

THE SECOND STEP was to replace the temple, whose pure and inspiring outlines had been designed by Jehovah himself, with sanctuaries modeled after those of heathendom. **31. An house,** or houses, **of high places,** such as the heathen erected for their idols, adapted to their sensual worship.

THE THIRD STEP. He **made priests of the lowest of the people.** R.V., "from among all the people," that is from all classes, of all characters, and not from those set apart for the purpose. His action had driven out the priests and the most conscientious people; and this must have been a serious loss to the moral power and stability of the kingdom. So the king of France banished and massacred the Huguenots, and it is said that a number of the best German officers of the army which gained the victory over France in 1871 were the descendants of the Huguenots, the best and most Christian blood of France, who were driven from their country by the Roman Catholic leaders on account of their religion. Saint Bartholomew's day was avenged.

THE FOURTH STEP, was the changing the times of the feasts, breaking with the ordained plan instituted under Moses, and hence throwing discredit on the Word of God.

SEEING OURSELVES IN AN ANCIENT MIRROR.

1. Our country is in the same kind of danger that Solomon's kingdom was when Jeroboam took the part of his people in the Disruption. Every person who grows rich by graft and corruption; every "Captain of Industry" who oppresses his employees in any way, that does not strive to be fair and to give to them as large a share of his prosperity as he can, is doing his part toward destroying our country. One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the number of great stores and factories which are working on the co-operative plan.

2. The Epitaph on Jeroboam should be "*The man who made Israel to sin.*" Twenty-three times in the books of Kings he is pilloried as the one "who made Israel to sin." Other kings, such as Ahab, may seem to bear a worse character, but they were merely building on the foundation of iniquity which Jeroboam laid.

The sin went on working its ruin, poisoning the nation, in spite of every effort to stop its course.

" I saw far down the coming time
The fiery chastisement of crime,
With noise of mingling hosts, and jar
Of falling towers and shouts of war,
I saw the nations rise and fall,
Like fire-gleams on my tent's white wall."
— *Whittier*, "*Ezekiel.*"

Jeroboam's Sin Was Disobedience. The necessity of obedience was plainly set before him. In the face of this condition, he disobeyed. He persuaded himself that he was obeying. He was tempted as Christ was tempted when Satan offered to give him all the kingdoms of the world, if only he would worship him. Jeroboam was ensnared and yielded to the glittering temptation in order to keep the kingdom entrusted to him.

A TESTIMONY. "All our great dramatists preach this one sermon. What studies in Nemesis Shakespeare has given us in *King Richard III.*, in *Macbeth*, in all his great tragedies. All the great masters who have depicted human life, — poets, novelists, dramatists, — bring out in varied form the invariable wages of sin. And we can understand why George Eliot who has herself given us some tragic studies, should say, 'NOTHING IN THIS WORLD IS WORTH DOING WRONG FOR.' " — *Hugh Black* in *The Gift of Influence.*

A BOY'S ADVICE. "Sometimes it takes a boy to put things plainly and tersely.

"I once heard from the lips of a boy one of the most sensible pieces of advice that I ever heard from any one. A question arose one day as to which of two orders should be obeyed, a certain person having received from two in authority slightly different instructions in regard to some work to be done. The matter was of no importance, and it was merely in fun that this perplexed person hesitated between the two orders.

"But the boy solved the problem, and he could not have done better if it had been the most serious matter in the world.

"'MIND THE HIGHEST BOSS;' he called out, hearty of voice and lusty of lung. 'MIND THE HIGHEST BOSS AND YOU'LL ALWAYS KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE.' " — *The Alabama Baptist.*

WHERE IS HELL? Rev. J. D. Bush, a successful street preacher, was preaching one evening when a man insisted on asking a question, and with much emphasis asked, "Where is hell?" The preacher answered: "I have never studied geography with reference to its location. The thing of special interest to me in regard to it is to know how not to find it, so as to get into it; but if you are specially interested in knowing where it is, I think I can tell you how to find it. I asked, did you ever hear of that great Jew called David (the questioner was a Jew), the great king of Israel? When he was an old man, delivering the reins of government into the hands of Solomon, among the many great and wise things he said to him was this: 'If thou seek him, he will be found of thee: but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever' (1 Chronicles 28). Having quoted this I said to him: You know more about the Hebrew language than I do, but I know enough about it to understand that the word translated 'cast off' is an active term and includes action like this (stooping down, he picked up his package of Testaments and motioned as if to throw them over beyond the crowd), *it means he will put thee clear outside and forever.* Paul writes to the Thessalonians, warning them against the doom of the godless, 'who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and the glory of his power.' *If you can find that place — that is hell; and the way to find it is to forsake God.*"

President Eliot of Harvard once said at a meeting of doctors that there was a tendency now not to believe in hell, but it was their business to tell young men that if they indulged in vices they would find a hell in this world.

Jeroboam's Greatest Wrong to His Nation Was the Introducing of Bad Things Under the Names and Auspices of Good Things. In the name of the religion of God, he introduced the deadly poison of idolatry which would destroy the true religion. He brought wolves in sheep's clothing into the fold of the sheep.

This is one of the most common of Satan's devices. We are meeting it all the time in the adulterations of food under pure food labels. The "devil of names" is very busy. But the greatest danger lies in the region of morals and religion.

There is a true relation of religion to the state, inspiring every statesman and every law with love, and righteousness, and the service of man. But with this intention, often sincere, there has often been introduced a union that has destroyed the value of both church and state; or an interpretation of the Bible which destroys its truth and power.

NOTE. "Good intentions will not help a man on his way, if he takes the wrong road."

LESSON III. — January 15.

ASA'S GOOD REIGN IN JUDAH. — 2 Chronicles 15 : 1–15.

COMMIT vs. 1, 2. READ 2 Chronicles 14–16 and 1 Kings 15: 9–24.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.*** — 2 CHRON. 15: 7.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

In that capital book, *The Boy's Round Table*, just published, we have the story of The International Order of the Knights of King Arthur, the largest fraternity of church boys in the world. It has 1,400 Castles, over 35,000 members, and is growing at the rate of more than one Castle a day. It was originated by the author Dr. William Byron Forbush. It is a very effective organization in our own school.

Miss A. B. Mackintire (who has been for 12 years at the head of a Castle in Cambridge under the shadow of Harvard University), says: "I believe it is the spirit of chivalry and courtliness and loyalty to ideals which the boys of this age need, and which they will get more naturally in a Castle of this order than in a literary, military, patriotic or religious club, while any one and all of these features may be made features of the Castle work."

The story of King Arthur's Knights is a good introduction to the story of King Asa, the young man who made a splendid fight against the idolatry and sins which had been ruining his father's kingdom.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 1, 2; Psa. 1: 1–3.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Abī'jäh; A'să; Ash'er-ah; Azărī'ăh; Bā'ăshă; Gē'răr (g hard); O'dĕd; Mā'ăcăh; Rehōbō'ăm; Shī'shăk; Zē'răh.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Asa began to reign B.C. 963 (or 919), near the close of Jeroboam's reign, in the 20th year of the kingdom of Judah.

Place. — The kingdom of Judah, and Jerusalem its capital, with excursions into Ephraim. Asa's great victory over the invading Ethiopians was gained at Mareshah, 25 miles S.W. of Jerusalem.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Asa and his early life influences.
What led him to be a reformer.
The Difficulties in his way.
A general account of his success.
What help came to him from the other kingdom?
His religious reforms and revivals, and how they were conducted.
His great victory over the Ethiopians.
The covenant and its value.
What was Asa's character, from a review of his whole life?

THE CHILD'S LESSON BOOK.

Travel on the Map. — The route of the two armies that fought at Mareshah, and mark the tribes into which Asa carried his reforms.

Make a List of the good things Asa did, and of the things in which he made mistakes.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Story of a Good King and What He Did to Make His People Better.

I. ASA THE REFORMER.
II. THE DIRE NEED OF REFORM.
III. THE TEN YEARS OF PROSPERITY AND REFORM.
IV. THE GREAT INVASION AND GREATER VICTORY.
V. THE SECOND REFORMATION. MODERN REFORMS AND REVIVALS.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Geo. Adam Smith's *Jerusalem*, pp. 90–96, gives a good general view of Asa's reign.

The *Expositor's Bible*, "Chronicles," pp. 338–365, gives a full discussion of Asa. Smith, *Old Testament History* (185, 186), and Stanley, *Jewish Church* (II, 331, 332), both show clearly the short-sightedness of Asa's political course.

On High Places, see Bib. Sacra. October, 1909, Art. on "Wellhausen's Prolegomena."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

For the attractions of idolatry see *Ben Hur*, the description of the Daphne paradise at Antioch.

On the Revival under Asa, compare Savonarola's at Florence, described in *Romola*. Patriotism is finely enforced by Dr. Edward Everett Hale in his *Man Without a Country*. *Boston's Awakening*, the story of a Remarkable Revival Campaign, by Dr. A. Z. Conrad of Park St. Church.

THE STORY OF A YOUNG REFORMER, AND HIS VARIED EXPERIENCES.

I. **Asa, the Reformer.** — ASA was the grandson of Rehoboam. His grandmother, the queen-mother at the beginning of his reign, was Maachah, an idolatress who had set up an idol and its debased worship in Jerusalem (1 Kings 15: 13). That she was his grandmother is shown by the statement that this queen-mother was Rehoboam's wife (2 Chron. 11: 20) (*So Geo. Adam Smith*). She survived Rehoboam and her son Abijah who reigned only three years, and was naturally the actual queen-mother when Asa her grandson, came to the throne.

YOUTH. Apparently Asa was quite a young man when he came to the throne, perhaps twenty years old.

HOME ENVIRONMENT. Asa lived in a corrupt court, under the influences of an idolatrous grandmother, surrounded by idolatry, flattered by courtiers. His father and his grandfather were neither of them good characters for a boy to look up to.

There were also some good influences from godly men and the temple worship, the good priests and their teaching of the Word of God.

HIS OUTLOOK UPON LIFE. Asa seems to have been a thoughtful young man, with open eyes, a sensitive conscience and a heart receptive to the influences of God's spirit.

He looked out upon his father's kingdom, and upon the northern kingdom, and saw what was going on; the idolatries and the evils that followed in their train, and the heathen nations and the fruits of idolatry in them. His heart burned within him, and urged him on to reform.

NOTE. There are two possible effects of the presence of great and prevailing evils. Some are overwhelmed by their power and attractions, and become a part of their downward tide. Others are repelled by them, hate them with a perfect hatred, and arouse all their being to destroy them. We all know instances of this. One of the best business men of my acquaintance, lived when a boy amid the vilest surroundings. But he had open eyes. He saw the effect of laziness, and resolved not to be lazy. He saw the effects of drinking and smoking, and resolved not to drink or smoke. He saw the degrading effects of profanity, and he determined not to swear. And so through the whole list.

HIS CHARACTER. So Asa "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as did David his father." It is a wonderful power that one has, that he can do right and serve God under the most difficult circumstances. Asa could say in a diviner sense than Henley had in mind, —

> "It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate,
> I am the captain of my soul."

II. **The Dire Need of Reform.** — 1 Kings 14: 22–24; 15: 3; 2 Chron. 12: 5, 14. Both kingdoms had degenerated since the times of David and Solomon. Sodomites, the vilest sensualists, could come into Judah. Idolatry prevailed, and sanctuaries were built on many a wooded hill, where the worship was accompanied by the sports, the revelry, the licentious freedom, appealing to every passion, with which idols were worshiped. In the revels of idolaters there was no restraint, no confession of sin, no costly sacrifices, except to passion, but they could serve every evil in the name and under the sanction of their gods. Wealth, fashion, worldliness, luxury, graft, cruelty, selfishness, combined to draw men as by a loadstone to these shrines. It is plain that there must have been some peculiar fascination about idolatry, or it could not have drawn the Israelites so frequently and persistently to its shrines and worship. While on the other hand the worship of Jehovah had its ceremonial of great beauty and power, always teaching and impressing great moral and spiritual truths. It was pure, it restrained all sin, it required the confession and forsaking of wrong, it appealed to the higher nature.

"The queen-mother, one of the most important personages in an Eastern state, was herself devoted to heathen observances." "The Hebrew calls the image erected by her 'a horrible, or grisly thing belonging to an Asherah.'" — *G. A. Smith* in *Expositor's Bible.*

Perhaps the descriptions by the prophet Amos of the state of things in the Israel of his day, may help us to realize the need of reform.

Still there was a redeeming power that gave hope to the reformer.

OUR MODERN NEED is not so great as in those days, and there are many, many more forces, and stronger, working against these modern evils. But the oppressions, the selfishness, the drunkenness, the cruelties, the debaucheries, the crimes, the graft, the slums, are so great, so intense to-day that to all who realize the facts, they

" Stir a fever in the blood of age,
And make the infant sinew strong as steel."

III. **The Ten Years of Prosperity and Reform. The First Reformation.** — 1 Kings 15: 11–15; 2 Chron. 14: 1–8. Asa immediately began his reforms, the details of which we will consider under THE SECOND REFORMATION.

1. There was a period of ten years of rest from external attack (2 Chron. 14: 1), which gave the king his opportunity.

2. In these years Asa himself did right and obeyed God. His example stood out before all his people. It is a great thing to have rulers who are true examples of goodness. This is the source of the greatest power any person can have over another.

Asa "stood four-square to all the Winds that blow."

3. Asa taught his people the word of God, to seek God, to keep his commandments. Education, knowledge of right and wrong, are the guides of the impulse to seek God. Therefore, the Sunday school. He entered upon a great, decisive thorough religious revival.

4. Asa set his people to work for their country. They built cities and walled defences against attack. They built and prospered. Working for their country, giving themselves up to their country's welfare, was one of the best ways of making permanent and thorough their religious training and life.

Egyptian King Charging on His Chariot.

NOTE that it is no new idea that college athletics, manual training in school, something for each Sunday School scholar to do in practice of the lessons he learns, are among the most efficient ways of training in virtue, and keeping from vice.

5. The prosperity was an object lesson before the nation and before Israel of the real value of serving God. The outward effects were natural and good and must follow, as Christ himself declared, obedience to God's laws. We cannot conceive of laws of God that do not on the whole promote the welfare of men.

IV. **The Great Invasion, and the Greater Victory.** — 2 Chron. 14: 9–15. "*There are four great binding things in the world: a common work, a common hope, deliverance from a common peril and loyalty to a common friend.*"

Three of these "binding" things we have already seen during the ten prosperous and peaceful years of Asa's reign. The fourth, "Deliverance from a common peril" followed during the next few years. It was like, in fact and in influence, the deliverance from Pharaoh's host by the passage through the Red Sea.

There are always dangers in continued peace and prosperity. Even revival lessons are not enough without the training of stress and storm, and victory over them. It was when

1. And [1] the Spirit spirit of God came upon Az-a-rī'ah the son of O'ded:
2. And and he went out [a] to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; [2] The the LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and [3] if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but [4] if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

[1] Num. 24: 2; Judg. 3: 10; 2 Chron. 20: 14.
[2] Jas. 4: 8.
[3] Vs. 4, 15; 1 Chron. 28: 9; 2 Chron. 33: 12, 13; Matt. 7: 7.
[4] 2 Chron. 24: 20.
[a] Heb., *before Asa.*

they "had eaten and were full" that the Hebrews were warned against forgetting God (Deut. 6: 10–15). "The moon is never eclipsed but when it is at the full." "It is the bright day that brings forth the adder." In *Katrine*, a music teacher says to one of his pupils: "You are not yet eighteen, and have been capable of a great sorrow! Child, thank God for it! You have a voice of gold. We will make of that sorrow diamonds and rubies and pearls to set in the voice. When you have real insight you will know that nothing was ever taken from us that more was not put in its place."

We learn that Asa had been for some time strengthening his defences, and organizing all the able-bodied men into a trained militia (not a standing army).

From Egypt in the southwest there came up an immense host, one million strong, with three hundred chariots, and like all early Oriental armies, living on the country, consuming the crops (as they had brought droves and herds of cattle with them), burning the houses, capturing families, and leaving devastation and ruin behind them, like a fire on the prairies, or the grasshoppers on a farm. They were approaching Judah, and had reached her southern borders, at Mareshah, 25 miles from Jerusalem. The army was led by Zerah, probably Osorkon I the son of Shishak, who had invaded Judah, and were urged on by the memory of the immense treasures which Shishak had obtained from Rehoboam.

No wonder the people were terrified.

But Asa used both faith and works. He went out with his army, and like Cromwell with his Ironsides, "cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee." It was God's cause as well as the people's, and they were strong in that trust.

The Ethiopians were overthrown, and their spoil fell into the hands of the Judahites.

This was "the sole occasion in sacred history in which an Israelite army met and defeated one of the great world powers in open battle."—*Farrar*. The victory was so decisive that Egypt did not send an army into Palestine for three centuries. This triumph over numbers so superior may easily be paralleled or surpassed by examples from secular history. "The odds were greater at Agincourt, where at least 60,000 French were defeated by not more than 20,000 Englishmen; at Marathon the Greeks routed a Persian army ten times as numerous as their own; in India English generals have defeated innumerable hordes of native warriors." "When Elizabeth's fleet defeated the Spanish Armada, the grateful piety of England felt that its foes had been destroyed by the breath of the Lord."

V. **The Second Reformation by Asa.**—Vs. 1–15. There was an earlier revival in the first years of Asa. It did its work, and it prepared the way to make the present one more effective. Both were carried out on the same lines and principles and may well be studied together.

1. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT, vs. 1, 2. **The Spirit of God came upon Azariah,** a prophet who was guided and strengthened by God for his work. All true revivals come from the Spirit of God. **He went out to meet Asa** on his return from the victory over Zerah and his host, with all the men of **Judah and Benjamin.** He struck while the iron was hot. The people were full of gratitude to God for their wonderful deliverance. They had been doing a patriotic and religious service for their country and their God. And there is nothing that so kindles love and enthusiasm for any cause as doing something hard for it.

2. THE PREACHING. **If ye seek him, he will be found of you.** God will not force us to be good, for forced virtue is no virtue. He wants to be found by us. He wants to help us. But these blessings cannot come to us unless we desire them earnestly enough to ask God for them.

If ye forsake him, he will forsake you. This is an eternal and necessary law.

3. Now [1] for [a] long seasons Israel hath been without the true God, and without [2] a teaching priest, and without law;

4. But [3] when they in their trouble did turn distress they turned unto the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

5. And [4] in those times there was there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. lands.

6. [5] And they were broken in pieces, nation was destroyed of against nation, and city of against city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

7. Be But be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak: slack: for your work shall be rewarded.

8. And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of O'ded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities [6] which he had taken from the hill mount country of E'phrăim; and he renewed the altar of the LORD, that was was before the porch of the LORD.

[1] Hos. 3: 4. [3] Deut. 4: 29. [5] Matt. 24: 7.
[2] Lev. 10: 11. [4] Judg. 5: 6. [6] 2 Chron. 13: 19.

Perfect laws of nature and of spirit are such that they bless those who obey them, and only those. And God's love for men is shown by his intense desire, and continual effort to persuade men to seek him.

3. AN EXAMPLE FROM THE FACTS OF THEIR PAST HISTORY, vs. 3–6. These verses were either spoken by the prophet, or given by the writer of Chronicles.

There had been long seasons when teaching the law had been neglected, with troubles and great vexations, as the consequence, as in the days of the Judges, when **God did vex them with all adversity**, to lead them to repentance. But whenever **they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord, . . . and sought him, he was found of them.** This is a true characterization of the whole course of their history.

4. THE ENCOURAGEMENT, v. 7. **Therefore be ye strong.** You have just had a great victory from God, because you sought him; now go to work, purify thoroughly your nation from the idolatry and sins that God hates, and make your people a God-loving, God-obeying, God-worshiping nation, with new zeal; and **your work shall be rewarded** by the protection, and prosperity, and noble living which God always will, and always has bestowed on such a people.

"*The first equipment of a strong, growing church must be a profound and memorable spiritual experience.*" — *Wm. T. Ellis.*

5. CLEANSING THE NATION FROM IDOLS AND THEIR ABOMINATIONS. —V. 8. **Put away the abominable idols** which had been set up in the groves on the hills; the foreign gods imported from the surrounding nations. "He took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images" (2 Chron. 14: 3). Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of Rome* tells us that at Daphne of Antioch "the temple and village were deeply bosomed in a thick grove of laurels and cypresses, which reached as far as a circumference of ten miles, and proved in the most sultry summers a cool and impenetrable shade. The senses were gratified with harmonious sounds and aromatic odors.

"And also *concerning* Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron." He also took away the Sodomites, those who practised all the vices which have made Sodom infamous forever.

He began at home. Then he went through his own kingdom, **all the land of Judah and Benjamin**, and then reached the utmost sphere of his influence, the cities which in the wars against him he had taken from the northern kingdom in the "hill country of Ephraim." All these idols and altars were exceedingly immoral, and destructive of all that was best in the kingdom.

We are told in 1 Kings 15: 14 that the high places were not removed. There were two kinds of high places, those used in the immoral worship of idols, and those used in various neighborhoods for the sacrifices to Jehovah. The first kind were removed by Asa. More-

9. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and [1] the strangers that sojourned with them out of E'phrā-ĭm and Ma-nās'seh, and out of Sĭm'e-on: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11. [2] And they offered sacrificed unto the LORD in that day, the same time, of [3] the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12. And they [4] entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul;

13. [5] That whosoever and that would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, [6] should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14. And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and [7] sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about.

[1] 2 Chron. 11: 16.
[2] 2 Chron. 14: 15.
[3] 2 Chron. 14: 13.
[4] 2 Kings 23: 3; 2 Chron. 34: 31; Neh. 10: 29.
[5] Ex. 22: 20.
[6] Deut. 13: 5, 9, 15.
[7] V. 2.

over the statement did not cover the whole period of Asa's reign. He removed them at one time, and they were gradually used again, and these were not removed.

6. ASA RENEWED THE MEANS OF WORSHIP AT THE TEMPLE. — V. 8.

7. THE REVIVAL OF TRUE RELIGION ATTRACTED PEOPLE FROM OTHER PARTS. — V. 9. **And the strangers with them**, who had immigrated from the other kingdom, **for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance**, the more religious, who felt the need of a better worship, and who **saw that the Lord his God was with him.** The victory God had given made known the favor of God, and the blessedness of serving him.

This is exactly what occurs in every true revival; for it brings out more clearly, the blessings of the Gospel, the joy of serving God, the value of religion for every good for which the heart of man is hungering.

8. A GREAT MEETING, AND GIFTS TO THE LORD. — Vs. 10, 11. **Gathered . . . at Jerusalem in the third month**, the Feast of Pentecost, or First Fruits, held 50 days after the Passover. The third month included parts of our May and June. At this meeting they gave a large part of the spoil they gained by their late victory. The cattle were used for sacrifices, and for thanksgiving feasts for the crowds. More religion always inspires more giving. Great meetings are a power for promoting any cause. Full churches, prayermeetings, conventions, growing numbers, are like a full tide in a stream, compared with its slow, stagnant, powerless flow in time of drought.

9. THE CONSECRATION COVENANT. — Vs. 12–15. **They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord.** This was like the public profession of serving Jesus Christ when joining the church. Some seem to think that they can be as good and as useful without a profession as with the covenant relation with others, and public vows to obey Jesus Christ and our Father in heaven.

But this is a mistaken feeling. A public covenant (1) gives one a far greater influence for good. It makes known your valuation of the cause. (2) It makes each individual stronger.

THE TESTIMONY OF PROF. WILLIAM JAMES, the eminent psychologist, is authority on this point: —

"The memory that an oath or vow has been made will nerve one to abstinences and efforts otherwise impossible; witness the pledge in the history of the temperance movement. A mere promise to his sweetheart will clean up a youth's life all over — at any rate for a time.

"That delightful being, Prince Pueckler-Muskau, writes to his wife from England that he has invented 'a sort of artificial resolution respecting things that are difficult of performance. My device,' he continues, 'is this: *I give my word of honor most solemnly to myself*

to do or to leave undone this or that. I am of course extremely cautious in the use of this expedient, but when once the word is given, even though I afterward think I have been precipitate or mistaken, I hold it to be perfectly irrevocable, whatever inconveniences I foresee likely to result. If I were capable of breaking my word after such mature consideration, I should lose all respect for myself — and what man of sense would not prefer death to such an alternative?'" — From article in *American Magazine*.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THOSE WHO REFUSED (v. 13) was death, because they were traitors not only to religion but to their country. The refusal would be manifested by taking part in heathen rites. This course of conduct would undermine the very foundations of the kingdom. We would not punish in this way for any religious refusal. But the state even now puts traitors to death in times of war. It seemed then necessary in order to keep their country from utter ruin.

THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY, in Dr. E. E. Hale's book found his case the very essence of bitterness. But who is "a man without a country" more really than he who breaks his country's laws, uses graft and dishonesty, cheats his country, and undermines its principles and works against its very foundations of justice, equality, righteousness and religion? We ought to be living examples of "the man *with* a country", — "Our country right or wrong," if right to keep her right, if wrong to make her right.

ENTHUSIASM. This oath of allegiance was taken with the greatest enthusiasm (vs. 14, 15). They expressed it **with shoutings, and with trumpets, and with cornets.** This was because the consecration was sincere, with all the mind and soul.

THE RESULT was God's blessing, peace, rest from all enemies, and the prosperity that grows out of the service of God.

MODERN REFORMATIONS AND REVIVALS.

The principles we have been studying in the work of King Asa apply to our own times, but are to be worked out in ways adapted to modern life. "The church is an army on duty, an army for the Christian conquest of the world by loving faithfulness."

There are great evils to be driven out of our country. The whole land is waking up to realize the need of civic righteousness.

There is always need of awakening new reforming zeal. For every step we gain gives us views of new needs, and new ideals.

Religious consecration to God and his kingdom, is needed not only for ourselves, but for our country. President Garfield in his inaugural address says: "To fail to give our young men a sense and appreciation of the dynamic force of religious faith in the progress of human affairs, is to leave them ignorant of the greatest and most profound fact of history." To-day, religion lies at the foundation of our national hopes and of our individual character. As Carlyle says, the most important thing in any person or nation is his religion; and that no nation which has not risen to divine white heat of reform is apt to come to much.

ILLUSTRATION. THE CROSS ABOVE THE STARS. "It is a good thing for us to be proud of our country because she is great, but it is a better thing to love her because she is good. In the naval academy for four years every man of them goes to church every Sunday, and every fourth Sunday you will hear a clause something like this: 'It is enjoined upon every officer and enlisted man to attend the service of God.' Let me suggest you go down here in Brooklyn and on one of those ships — they will be glad to have you come — arrange to get there about 10.30 sharp. The bugle will begin to blow slowly. That is the call for divine service. Then you will see the flag lowered, and another flag go way up in the air. Look at this, please. It is a white cross on a blue background. You will see the national flag go up again slowly, and stop just below the other flag. This is to me very impressive. 'My friends, you know there is not another flag above our Stars and Stripes. It will not take much imagination on your part to grasp the symbolism there. Broad stripes, rich crimson in color, tell simply of our country's sympathy with the oppressed sons of the earth. And the stars — did you ever watch them? You can see them glitter and sparkle and twinkle. They know that they are the glorious constellation that heaven has set in the dark night. You will see that glorious flag waving proudly above things of this earth, but you will see it looking up in humility to the flag of the white cross above." — *From Address by Richard Pierson Hobson* in *Brooklyn*.

IMPERFECT INSTRUMENTS. If you have read the whole of the lesson as proposed by the Lesson Committee you will see recorded some imperfections in this good king.

When attacked by the immense army of Baasha king of Israel, he took the Temple

treasures and hired the king of Syria to attack the northern kingdom, his brethren, with all the horrors of war.

Even from a selfish point of view it was folly to have a heathen king conquer Judah's greater defence against the greatest enemies of all Palestine, and show him some of the treasures he might gain by going farther and ravaging Judah. The remedy was worse than the disease.

But when a prophet showed him his folly, and would have him trust in God, Asa shut up the prophet in prison; another folly as great as "to wring the neck of the crowing cock thinking that this would stop the sun from rising."

Then in his last years when he had some grievous disease of the feet, he consulted the magicians and priests of idols, instead of the Lord, for which he was condemned.

Ruskin has said, "Medicine often fails of its effect, but poison never; and while in summing up the observations of a past life not unwatchfully spent, I can truly say that I have a thousand times seen Patience disappointed of her hope and Wisdom of her aim. I have never yet seen folly fruitless of mischief, nor vice conclude but in calamity." — *Time and Tide.*

LITTLE SINS OPENING THE DOOR FOR GREATER. "There is an Indian story of a morsel of a dwarf who asked a king to give him all the ground he could cover with three strides. The king, seeing him so small, said 'Certainly.' Whereupon the dwarf suddenly shot up into a tremendous giant, covering all the land with the first stride, all the water with the second, and with the third he knocked the king down and took his throne.

"There is a little couplet which reads thus:

'Who is it knocks so loud? A little lonely sin,
Slip through, we answer — and all hell is in!'

"If Satan can prevail on us to go with him one step out of the way, we are in danger of making no stop short of the height of wickedness." — *Rev. G. F. B. Hallock, D.D.*

LESSON IV. — January 22.

OMRI AND AHAB LEAD ISRAEL INTO GREATER SIN. — 1 Kings 16: 15–33.

PRINT 1 Kings 16: 23–33. READ 1 Kings 21, 22. COMMIT vs. 25, 30.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*** — PROV. 14: 34.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

In my early life I used to dislike biographies, because most of them seemed to say, "Hitch your wagon to a star," but while they pointed out the star and described its glories, did not show how the man climbed to it. Not till I read Hugh Miller's *My Schools and Schoolmasters* did I enjoy an autobiography, for that book showed the man in the making, and how he reached the greatness he attained.

The same principles apply to the story of a man like Ahab who grew worse and worse. For here we have not only the dreadful picture of the character and fate of a bad man as a warning, to make us hate such a character, but we are made to see the downward steps that brought him there, lest we enter upon that course.

It is often an evil to dwell on the sins and crimes of bad men, especially when they are put in attractive forms, Satan appearing like an angel of light, the blossoms of the tree of Death and not its bitter fruit. But to see it so as to hate its degradation and results, see it as a warning, is necessary to our training in virtue. The great emperor showed his son a drunkard in his folly, in order to warn him against touching the wine that made him drunk.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Omri reigned 12 years from B.C. 936 (or 893) to 925 (or 882). Ahab his son, from B.C. 925–904 (861).

Place. — They were kings of Israel, with their capital at Samaria.

LEARN BY HEART.

Rom. 2: 9, 10; Prov. 1: 24–26, 29–31.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

A'hăb; A'să; Ash'ĕrăh; Bā'ăl; Eth'bāăl; Gĭb'be-thon; Gĭ'nath; Jĕrōbō'ăm; Jĕz'ĕbĕl; Nĕ'băt; Om'rĭ; Shē'mĕr; Tĭr'zăh; Tĭb'nĭ; Zĭdō'nĭăns; Zĭm'rĭ.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

Get a picture of the Moabite stone.

Name all the persons connected with Ahab.

Make a list of Warnings — what not to do — from the life of Ahab.

Tell the story of Bunyan's Pilgrim putting up a sign at the entrance to the path that led to Giant Despair's Castle. Write out the words on the sign.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Beacon Lights from the Rocks on which Ahab's Career Was Wrecked.

INTRODUCTION. TWO FACTS OR PRINCIPLES.

I. BEACON LIGHT ON THE ROCK OF WORLDLY ABILITY AND ENERGY AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAWS. OMRI (vs. 23–28).

II. BEACON LIGHT ON THE ROCK OF YIELDING OURSELVES TO THE EVIL TENDENCIES OF OUR AGE. AHAB (vs. 29, 30).

III. BEACON LIGHT ON THE ROCK OF EVIL COMPANIONSHIP (vs. 31–33).

IV. BEACON LIGHT ON THE ROCK OF INDIFFERENCE TO GOD'S MERCIES (1 Kings 17–21); ON THE ROCK OF ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH (1 Kings 21).

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Ahab's character and environment.
Jezebel, the evil of bad companions.
Name the evil things in Ahab's life against which we should be warned.
What helps had he toward being good?
What do you find in this lesson to awake in you the patriotic desire to expel evils from our country?
What evils in your own city or country that you should seek to expel?

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The Expositor's Bible on 1 Kings is very helpful. Maurice's *Prophets and Kings*, chap. VIII., McCurdy's *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, I., 256–9, for the work of Omri and of Ahab.

The religion of the time, and especially the High places, are described and illustrated by many cuts of the excavations in Palestine, by Prof. S. R. Driver's *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible*, Oxford Un. Press, 1909.

"The Moabite Stone" is pictured and described in Prof. Ira Price's *Monuments of the Old Test;* and described and interpreted in Professor Sayce's *Higher Criticism and the Monuments.*

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* "The Minotaur" the monster which fed on young men and maidens as to the idols of Jezebel children were sacrificed. The descending circles of hell, pictured in Dante's *Inferno.*

Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth shows many resemblances to Jezebel, and Macbeth to the weak Ahab. Poe's weird tale, *The Pit and the Pendulum* may be used as a terrible illustration of the progress of evil.

Tennyson's "The Victim" illustrates the sacrifice of children in the worship of Baal in Ahab's time.

THE STORY OF AHAB'S DOWNWARD CAREER,

or

LIGHTHOUSES ON THE SEA OF LIFE, WARNING US FROM THE ROCKS ON WHICH SO MANY ARE WRECKED.

When Bunyan's Pilgrims had escaped from the Dungeon of Giant Despair, and had again reached the king's highway of righteousness, they erected a pillar at the entrance to By-path Meadow which had led them to Doubting Castle, and on this pillar they engraved, *Over this stile is the way to Doubting Castle which is kept by Giant Despair.*

All through this lesson we should keep in view TWO FACTS OR PRINCIPLES.

FIRST. That there is only one way to a successful life or nation, and that is, through Obedience to God's Laws. No matter how difficult obedience may be, how many obstacles to be overcome, there is no other way.

23. In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Om'rī to reign over Israel, *and reigned* twelve years: six years reigned he in Tir'zah.

24. And he bought the hill Sa-mā'r-ĭa of Shē'mer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shē'mer, the owner of the hill, [a] [1] Sa-mā'rĭ-a.

[1] 1 Kings 13: 32; 2 Kings 17: 24; John 4: 4. *a* Heb., *Shomeron.*

SECOND. That God has given us the power of choice, and it is within our power to choose the right way. No storms, no dangers, no opposition can prevent us if we will to choose.

"One ship drives East, another drives West,
While the selfsame breezes blow;
'Tis the set of the sails, and not the gales,
That bids them where to go.

"Like the winds of the air, are the wars of the fates,
As we journey along through life;
'Tis the set of the soul that decides the goal,
And not the storm or the strife."

I. Lighthouse on the Rock of Worldly Ability and Energy as a Substitute for Obedience to God's Laws. Omri. — Vs. 23-28. **In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel.** Omri was the general of Israel's army in the unsettled and troublous times that followed Baasha's reign. Before his call to be king we know nothing about him. He was the sixth king of Israel, and founded the fourth dynasty which lasted 60 years, with four kings. When first brought to notice he was fighting for his country against the Philistines at Gibbethon. Another general named Timri, was put forward as king, and there was war for several years between these two warriors. Finally Omri had full possession of the kingdom.

The thirty and first year of Asa designates the time when Omri became sole king, but the **twelve years** includes also the 4 or 5 years during which his reign was contested. **Reigned he in Tirzah,** a little north of Mt. Ebal, which Jeroboam made his capital after he had reigned some time in Shechem.

OMRI'S VALOR AND ENTERPRISE. His first work was to choose a better site for his capital, for Tirzah had doubtless been injured in the siege, and its location was not the best for defence.

24. He bought the hill Samaria for his capital. This choice proved his sagacity as a general and statesman. The superior strategic position of Samaria, a conical hill standing 400 feet above the base of the broad valley, is evidenced by the long siege which it endured, and the stout resistance which it offered to the armies of Sargon (B.C. 722. See Lesson XII., Second Quarter) as well as to the Syrian hosts in the preceding century (1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 6: 24, etc.). The surrounding eminences "are beyond the range of catapult and bow, and so were not a source of danger." — *Hastings' Bible Dictionary.* "As Constantine's sagacity is fixed by his choice of Constantinople, so is that of Omri by his choice of Samaria. Six miles from Shechem, in the same well-watered valley, here opening into a wide basin, rises an oblong hill, with steep yet accessible sides, and a long, level top. This was the mountain of Samaria. It combined, in a union not elsewhere found in Palestine, strength, beauty, and fertility. It commanded a full view of the sea and the plain of Sharon on the one hand, and of the vale of Shechem on the other. It stood amidst a circle of hills, commanding a view of its streets and slopes, itself the crown and glory of the whole scene." — *Stanley.*

It was the best place politically for the capital. Herod the Great lived there, and called the place Sebaste. The Crusaders built here "a great Gothic cathedral, whose ruins stand by the columns of Herod. But, since then, the town has sunk to a miserable village." — *Smith's Hist. Geog. of the Holy Land.*

Bought . . . for two talents of silver. Talents of silver were either heavy standard $1,940 each, or light standard $970.

Of his wars and victories very little has been recorded in Kings, and merely a slight reference to other records. But an unexpected source of light has been thrown upon Omri's career, showing him to have been an energetic and powerful military ruler.

THE MOABITE STONE. In 1868 a German missionary, Rev. F. Klein, discovered at Dibon in the region of ancient Moab, east of the Dead Sea, at a mound containing the ruins of that ancient city, a very remarkable stone on which was an inscription in Ancient Phoenician letters, a language closely related to Hebrew. This stone is called "The Moabite Stone." It is made of bluish-black basalt, 2 feet wide, nearly 4 feet high, and

25. But / And [1] Om'rī did that which was wrought / did worse than all that were dealt wickedly above all that were evil in the eyes / sight of the LORD, and before him.

26. For he [2] walked in all the way of Jĕr-o-bō'am the son of Nē'băt, and in his sin / sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their [3] vanities.

27. Now the rest of the acts of Om'rī which he did, and his might that he shewed, are / are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

28. So Om'rī slept with his fathers, and was buried in Sa-mā'rĭ-a: and A'hăb his son reigned in his stead.

[1] Mic. 6: 16. [2] V. 19. [3] V. 13.

14½ inches thick, and rounded both at the top and bottom. It may now be seen in the Louvre, Paris.

The remarkable thing about this stone is that after 2,800 years it brings to light a confirmation of and supplement to the Biblical story of Omri and Ahab. On this stone Mesha, king of Moab during their reigns, tells us that King Omri "had subdued Moab, and had collected from her a yearly tribute. Ahab had also enjoyed the same revenue, amounting, under Mesha's reign, to the wool of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams (2 Kings 3: 4–27). At the close of Ahab's reign, Mesha refused longer to pay this tribute. The stone was set up by King Mesha about 850 B.C. to commemorate his deliverance from the yoke of Israel." —*Prof. Ira M. Price.*

The Moabite Stone.
The original in the Louvre, Paris.

OMRI'S DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD'S RELIGION AND GOD'S LAW. **25. Omri wrought evil.** We are not told the particulars of Omri's sin, but Micah (6: 16) says, "For the *statutes of Omri* are kept." "We cannot doubt that these 'statutes of Omri' were measures adopted for more completely isolating the people of Israel from the services of the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, and of perpetuating — perhaps of increasing — their idolatrous practices." **In the eyes of the Lord.** Men thought him rich and prosperous, but God looks on the heart and not on outward appearances.

ILLUSTRATION. The story of the dishonest workman who was building bad stone into the top of "Tom Tower" at Oxford. Canon Buckland watched him with a telescope from his distant study, and terrified him by shouting a rebuke.

And did worse than all. All sin tends to increase in geometrical ratio. It is like a fire, spreading rapidly where there is material to burn.

26. Walked in all the way of Jeroboam, who led the nation into idolatry, and into those vices and sins which are the ruin of men and nations. **Provoke the Lord . . . to anger.** Not passion, but indignation against sin. God loves the sinner but hates the sin; and so should we. **With their vanities.** "This word is often employed in the Old Testament of false gods, and the worship paid to them," because they were illusions, deceptions, with no power to help or guide. **Vanities** include all those things which deceive the soul with vain hopes, false expectations, unsubstantial joys; as hopes for gain by wrong doing, for success by breaking God's laws, for happiness through sinful pleasures.

THE RETRIBUTION for Omri's course did not come all at once for the nation, but the seeds of ruin were coming up like upas trees.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, the leading financial journal of this country, has lately published an article, copied into the financial columns of other leading papers, on *The World worships the Man who gets there.*

29. And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began A'hăb the son of Om'rī to reign over Israel: and A'hăb the son of Om'rī reigned over Israel in Sa-mā'rī-a twenty and two years.

30. And A'hăb the son of Om'rī did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him.

"A large part of the world reserves its applause for the men who 'get there,' who achieve results, who do things, and it does not much care about the methods employed to achieve these results. A politician who can elect his candidate by buying a state is a great man. Hurrah for him! Make him a cabinet officer. Give him a fat contract. Put him at the head of the party. 'The way to do things is to do them, and it is not necessary to bother much about the ethics of the game.' That is a law of one school of business as it is of one school of politics. Is there a franchise to be got? Buy it. Is there a combination to be formed? Form it. Is there a competitor who must be crushed? Crush him. Is there a chance to make a big deal? Make it. Never mind about methods, or laws, or ethics, or justice, or religion. Think about them afterward.

"Now there is nothing more diabolical than such a theory and practice as that. It means anarchy. It spells national ruin. 'Results' are indeed what the world is laboring for, but results that are the achievement of graft, of violation of law, of injustice, oppression and deceit — such results are worse than failure. The men who do things without 'bothering about ethics' are sowing seeds, the harvest of which may some day be revolution."

ILLUSTRATION. "It is a great figure of Plato in 'The Republic' in which he asks us to imagine a many-headed beast, composed of all sorts of animals growing together; then a lion, and finally a man. Now, says Plato, imagine all these knitted together; give them the outward form of man, but let them all live separately within the one form. Sin means the feeding of the lower animals until they dominate the man. Righteousness means the feeding of the man until he dominates the animals. Every one of us carries about within him these three things." — *S. S. Times.*

"Arise, and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die." — *Tennyson.*

II. A Beacon Light on the Rock of Yielding Ourselves to the Evil Tendencies and Customs of the Age in which We Live. Ahab. — Vs. 29, 30. **Ahab the son of Omri.** "Ahab" means "*one who closely resembles his father.*"—*Hastings' Bib. Dic.* He followed his father Omri in his military traditions and prowess; but still more in the idolatrous tendencies, the debased morality, the alliance with heathen nations, the neglect of true religion, the downward course toward ruin, which characterized Omri's reign. Instead of being a positive, creative force for good, he sailed with the downward tide, as a boat without engine or rower down the rapids of Niagara toward the falls. "It takes live fish to swim up stream." "A boy's will is the wind's will."

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

Ahab "was a man not destitute of ability, not devoid of patriotism, not wanting in courage, at times not unkingly, but perfectly indifferent to the obligations under which he lay as ruler of a nation which God had taken into covenant with himself."—*Wood.* He was egotistical, covetous, selfish, cruel, the worst of Israel's evil kings.

30. Evil . . . above all that were before him, as was said also of Omri (v. 25), Ahab was worse than preceding kings because he added to their calf-worship, which began, at least, with a pretence of honoring Jehovah, the worship of foreign and shameful deities.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "Sin, like a poisonous weed, re-sows itself, and becomes eternal by reproduction."—*Beecher.*

A little girl discovered a black mark on her hands and exclaimed, "When I touched the stove-lid, I knew it was black; but I didn't know it was contagious!"

The little boy whose father reproved him for misbehavior saying, "What makes you such a naughty boy? I never behaved so when I was a boy," stood closer to the truth than he knew when he answered, "*I expect it was because you had a better father.*"

31. And it came to pass, [a] as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jĕr-o-bō'am the son of Nē'băt, [1] that he took to wife Jĕz'e-bĕl the daughter of Eth'bā-al king of the [2] Zī-dō'nĭ-ans, [3] and went and served Bā'al, and worshipped him.

32. And he reared up an altar for Bā'al in [4] the house of Bā'al, which he had built in Sa-mā'rĭ-a.

[1] Deut. 7 : 3.
[2] Judg. 18 : 7.
[3] 1 Kings 21 : 25, 26; 2 Kings 10 : 18.
[4] 2 Kings 10 : 21, 26, 27.
[a] Heb., *was it a light thing.*

One of the dangers of the times is the thoughtlessly following bad customs in business and in social life, drinking customs, graft customs, customs of dealing with children, with young criminals, with heathen, etc. The hopeful sign of modern times is the awakening to the reality of bad customs and to the effort to change them.

At the same time it is well to remember that retaining good customs and habits is one of the best and strongest means of progress. Each one is a step upward. Each one becomes a natural channel for right actions, and enables us to give our time and strength to those that need them.

NOTE. "While the fight between generosity and meanness is going on, we look on with something deeper than a spectator's interest; it is not until the man throws up his hands and lets himself sink in the slough that we turn away in disgust."—*The Outlook.*

III. The Beacon Light on the Rock of Bad Companionship.—Vs. 31–33. **He took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal.** Her name means *chaste*—the modern Isabel. Her father's name means *with Baal, i.e.*, under his protection. He was not only king, but according to Josephus a priest of the licentious worship of Astarte. He assassinated the reigning king of Sidon, his own brother, and usurped the throne for 32 years. Jezebel inherited his wickedness, ferocity, and idolatrous superstitions. "She was the aunt of Virgil's Belus, and great aunt of Pygmalion, and of Dido, the famous foundress of Carthage."—*Farrar.*

King of the Zidonians, the people whose chief cities were Tyre and Sidon, northwest of the kingdom of Israel. "Bold, unscrupulous, firm of purpose, resolute in action, Jezebel was the Lady Macbeth of Israelite history, complete master of her husband, who was a mere tool in her hands, and the evil genius at once of her dynasty and of her country."—*Rawlinson.* From 2 Kings 9: 30 we learn that she was careful to make herself attractive in dress and fashion. Her very name has become a type all through history. "It is surely a singular coincidence whereby the murderer and his victim, Jehu and Jezebel, are remembered best, not for the part they played at an important crisis in Israel's history, but he for his 'furious driving,' and she for her painted face."—*J. A. Selbie* in *Hastings' Bib. Dic.*

"When we learn what Baal was, and how he was worshiped, we are not surprised at so stern a condemnation. Half Sun-god, half Bacchus, half Hercules, Baal was worshiped under the image of a bull, 'the symbol of the male power of generation.' In the wantonness of his rites he was akin to Peor; in their cruel atrocity to the kindred Moloch; in the demand for victims to be sacrificed to the horrible consecration of lust and blood he resembled the Minotaur, the wallowing 'infamy of Crete,' with its yearly tribute of youths and maidens. . . .

"The shadow of Queen Jezebel falls dark for many years over the history of Israel and Judah. She was one of those masterful, indomitable, implacable women who, when fate places them in exalted power, leave a terrible mark on the annals of nations. What the Empress Irene was in the history of Constantinople, or the 'She-wolf of France' in that of England, or Catherine de' Medici in that of France, that Jezebel was in the history of Palestine. . . .

"Jezebel stands out on the page of sacred history as the first supporter of *religious persecution.* Such fanaticism is a frequent concomitant of guilt. She is the authentic authoress of priestly inquisitions. . . .

"If no king so completely 'sold himself to work wickedness' as Ahab, it was because 'Jezebel his wife stirred him up.'"—*Farrar* in *Expositor's Bible.*

Went and served Baal, and worshipped him. The downward course of religion is marked if not measured by the fact that while Solomon allowed his heathen wives to worship their gods, but did not join in the worship, Ahab rejected Jehovah by joining his wife in worshiping the idol.

33. [1] And A'hăb made [a] the Ash'er-ah: and A'hăb [2] did yet more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

[1] 2 Kings 13: 6; 17: 10; Jer. 17: 2. [2] V. 30; 1 Kings 21: 25.

32. Ahab built **the house of Baal** in his capital **Samaria**, where, so far as we know, there was no temple to Jehovah. "It was large enough to contain an immense throng of worshipers. It stood apparently within a great walled enclosure, and rose in such strength as to seem like a castle. A huge image of the sun-god, flanked by idolatrous symbols, was seen within, amidst a blaze of splendor, reflected from gilded and painted roofs, and walls, and columns. A staff of 450 priests in their vestments ministered at the altars." — *Geikie.*

Jar Containing Bones of Sacrificed Infants.
Found near the corner of a temple at Megiddo, 20 miles north of Samaria.

LIGHT FROM EXCAVATIONS AT GEZER AND MEGIDDO IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM. Gezer is a mound composed of the remains of an ancient town 19 miles west of Jerusalem and 32 miles southwest of Samaria, where recently excavations have been made. Here and at Megiddo have been found various altars, pillars and jars which throw light on the ancient worship of Baal.

The jars containing the bones of infants show one of the evils of Ahab's heathenish rites. "We know," says Prof. Driver, "from Greek writers, that the Phoenicians and Carthagenians, in times of grave national danger or calamity, were in the habit of sacrificing children for the purpose of either appeasing the anger or obtaining the help of the national deity. In 2 Kings 3: 27, we read that Mesha king of Moab [who lived in Ahab's time] when hard pressed by the invading Israelites sacrificed his eldest son to Chemosh the national god of Moab."

Compare Tennyson's *The Victim* where in a time of Famine and Plague the priests of Odin and Thor cried out to their gods, —

"Help us from famine
And plague and strife!
What would you have of us?
Human life?

"Were it our nearest,
Were it our dearest,
(Answer O, answer)
We give you his life."

The answer was, —

"The King is happy
In child and wife;
Take you his dearest,
Give us a life."

The mother, to save her son, exclaiming "I am his dearest," rushed on the knife.

"O, Father Odin
We give you a life,
Which was his nearest?
Who was his dearest?
The gods have answered,
We give them the wife."

"In Alaska, till in 1867 it came into the possession of the United States, human sacrifices were common at the foundation of a new house." — *Prof. S. R. Driver.*

THE PILLARS beside the altars of Baal are supposed to have been the residence of Baal as the **grove** which **Ahab made** (v. 33), was a wooden post, R.V. "the Asherah," regarded as the residence of Ashtoreth the female divinity corresponding to Baal; associated with the most indecent rites.

33. **Ahab did more to provoke the Lord . . . to anger** (indignation) **than all the kings of Israel that were before him.** The tree of evil planted by the previous kings, had grown rapidly under the tropic influence of Jezebel, and the fruit was more abundant and more like the apples of Sodom.

ILLUSTRATION. Mark Antony yoked up two lions and drove them through the streets

of Rome. But there are two lions no one can yoke together, — God and Baal, God and Mammon the modern Baal. Ahab chose Baal and Mammon, and left out God.

EVIL COMPANIONS. It is of the utmost importance to avoid false friendships and companionship with the bad. Every power for good in true friendship is a power for evil in the false. Our environment, the persons with whom we come in contact, especially if we admire them, are among the most potent factors for good or evil in our lives. A great deal of evil comes from false friendship. The danger is doubly great because it comes under the guise of friendliness, — a wolf in sheep's clothing. "Give me," says one, "a roaring devil rather than a sleeping one; for a sleeping devil makes me slumber, but roaring ones provoke me to run to my Master." How many young people are ruined by bad companionship! How large a part of drunkenness comes from the custom of social drinking! How many are kept away from Christ and heaven by fear of their friends!

IV. Beacon Lights from Other Rocks on which People Are Wrecked.

Looking forward to the further history of Ahab which we shall study in connection with Elijah, we note

FIRST. THE ROCK OF INDIFFERENCE TO GOD'S MARVELOUS MERCIES.

(1) The warning of Elijah, the fire from heaven, the destruction of Jezebel's prophets, the famine, and the blessed rain (1 Kings 17–21).

(2) His deliverance from the overwhelming hosts of Benhadad, the king of Syria (1 Kings 20).

(3) The Denunciation from God through Elijah (1 Kings 21).

SECOND. THE ROCK OF ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH (1 Kings 21). The murder of Naboth in order to obtain his land. This is the rock on which multitudes are wrecked to-day. Every daily paper has records of such wrecks. Men in high positions using other people's money, forging notes, crushing out competitors; getting income from oppressing workmen, women and children, and from unhealthy tenements; stealing from banks, and monied institutions. These are so many that it seems impossible that any more would take the risk.

ILLUSTRATION. The Norse Story of Siegfried tells us how in the Nibelungen Land two brothers were quarreling over a hoard of gold left them as a legacy; and both nearly died of starvation because neither was willing to trust his brother in the distribution of the gold. "O gold! gold! Truly thou art the world's curse, thou art man's bane."

And yet God meant it for good, if used as God would have it. For "when the bright spring time of the New World shall come, then will the curse be taken from thee, and thy yellow brightness will be the sign of purity and enduring worth, and then thou wilt be a blessing to mankind."

Regin, seeking treasures as in a mine, was asked what he would do with it, — "I will turn winter into summer, I will make the desert places glad, I will bring back the Golden Age."

As the world grows better, and willing to make a better use of wealth, the wealth increases. It is only when men seek first the kingdom of heaven, that wisdom can grant that "all these things shall be added unto you."

LESSON V. — January 29.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S GOOD REIGN IN JUDAH.

2 Chronicles 17: 1–13.

PRINT vs. 1-6, 9-13. READ 2 Chronicles 17-20. COMMIT vs. 3, 4.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*** — MATT. 6: 33.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Mr. Edgar White, in the *Sunday School Times*, relates "an old legend to the effect that a student approached Socrates and said: 'Master, I have learned all the lessons which thou gavest me to study. I know where the planets are and their names. I am acquainted with all the forms of government and the characters of the different tribes. I know the names of all the rulers

and those who are in high authority. I have read the writings of the wise men, analyzed them and know their meaning. Everything has been done. There is nothing more to do.'

"'Nothing to do!' shrieked the sage, as his eyes flashed and he held out a threatening arm. 'Nothing to do! Why, lad, dost thou not know that America has not been discovered! That Carlyle's French Revolution is yet to be written? That Charles Dickens has not yet trimmed the quill to write David Copperfield? That Sir Isaac Newton has not yet discovered that wonderful new law which will be called gravitation, and which attracts things in space to earth? That Watts has not yet captured and imprisoned that terrible and yet docile power which is to be called steam, and which is to revolutionize this world! That Morse has not invented the electro-magnetic telegraph which will enable residents of distant continents to converse as readily as you do to-day with your neighbor across the back fence. That Marconi, an Italian, is going to discover and command more wonderful ——'

"'There! There!' said the student, humbly, rolling up his sleeves; 'I see, master, there is yet much for me to do.'"

This story may make an excellent introduction to the lesson for to-day. As we study what an energetic, earnest, godly, patriotic man did for his country, we can learn how much there is for each of us to do, for Ourselves, for our Nation, and for the World.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jehoshaphat's reign of 25 years was from B.C. 922 (or 878) to 897 (or 853). The 61st to the 86th years of the kingdom.

Parallel Reigns in Israel. — Ahab, 18 years, and Joram 7 years.

Prophets. — Elijah in Israel.
Micaiah in Israel.
Jehu the son of Hanani in Judah.
Jahaziel in Judah.

Place. Judah. — The reform extended to the hill country of Ephraim. The battle against the Syrians took place at Ramoth-Gilead, to the east of the Jordan; the "hallelujah victory" near Tekoa, south of Bethlehem.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 3–5; 2 Chron. 20: 20, 21 (the last part of each verse).

PRONUNCIATIONS.

A'hăb, Amărī'ăh, Am'mŏnītes, A'săph, Athălī'ăh, Ba'ălim, Bēersh[e]'bă or Bēer'-shĕbă, Bĕr'ăcăh, En'-gĕdī or En-gē'dī (g hard), Hănā'nī, Jāhā'zĭĕl, Jēhō'răm, Jēhosh'ăphăt, Jē'hū, Mīcā'ĭăh (yăh), Mō'-ăbītes, Phĭlĭs'tĭnes, Rā'mŏth-Gĭl'ĕăd, Sē'ĭr, Tēkō'ă, Zĕbădī'ăh, Zĕchărī'ăh.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Jehoshaphat.
The condition of Judah when he became king.
His virtues and imperfections.
How far his alliance with Ahab was wise, and how far wrong.
The finest trait in his character.
The connection of material improvements and progress with religious revivals and reforms.
The Hallelujah Victory.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

King Jehoshaphat — who? where he lived? how old?
List of the good things he did.
Picture of the idols in his land.
What things in his story illustrate the Golden Text?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Story of Jehoshaphat, the Patriot Reformer. Missions.

I. JEHOSHAPHAT.
II. AS A BUSINESS MAN, STRENGTHENING HIS COUNTRY'S DEFENCES (vs. 1, 2, 12).
III. THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE KING (vs. 3, 4, 6).
IV. THE RESULTANT PROSPERITY (vs. 5, 10–13).
V. JEHOSHAPHAT'S CAMPAIGN OF REFORM (v. 6).
VI. HIS MISSIONARY CAMPAIGN (2 Chron. 19: 4).
VII. THE HALLELUJAH VICTORY (2 Chronicles 20).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Wood's *Hebrew Monarchy* is especially good on this lesson. Farrar in *Expositor's Bible, 1 Kings.* Professor Bennett's treatment of the Hallelujah Victory as illustrating "The Doctrine of Non-resistance," *Expositor's Bible, Chronicles.* Chapter XI. in Rawlinson's *Kings of Israel and Judah.* Professor Driver's *Recent Research as Illustrating the Bible*, on High Places.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Suggestions helpful in teaching the lesson may be obtained from Whittier's poem, *The Reformer*.

Poem by George Lansing Taylor on "Jehoshaphat's Deliverance," the Hallelujah victory (2 Chronicles 20).

Scott's Romances, such as "The Fair Maid of Perth" give us a good idea of the border warfare between Judah and Israel.

Rev. William C. Gordon, Ph.D., in his *Social Ideals of Tennyson* (U. of Chicago, 1906), gives a most interesting aid to the understanding of Jehoshaphat's reforms, in his chapter on "England in the time of Tennyson."

1. And [1] Je-hŏsh'a-phăt his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel.

[1] 1 Kings 15: 24.

THE PATRIOT KING, AND WHAT HE DID FOR HIS NATION. A MISSIONARY LESSON.

JUDAH *was intended to be like a city set on a hill in order that the surrounding nations, seeing what the true God had done for them, might be attracted to Him and His Righteousness.*

EVERY FAILURE *from the perfect life, every moral wrong, every fall into idolatry, diminished their power for good; and it was necessary that punishment should follow such conduct, both to persuade them into the ways of God and righteousness, and also to show the heathen that only obedience to God could lead to the blessings prepared for God's people.*

What things Jehoshaphat did to reform his country are based on the same principles as those used and needed in MODERN MISSIONS.

EVERY CHRISTIAN LAND *ought to be a perfect example of the kingdom of God, and of the blessings that abound in it.*

Every failure to live that life lessens its influence over the heathen nations.

But both in Judah and in Christian lands the good far outmeasures the evil. Compare Mr. Stead's *If Christ came to Chicago*, with Dr. E. E. Hale's *How Christ came to Boston.*

I. **Jehoshaphat.** — Our lesson covers the entire reign and work of this good king.

HIS NAME means "Jehovah judged," a name given by his religious father.

HIS PARENTS were Asa, the good king, and Azubah, about whom nothing more is known.

HIS AGE at his accession was 35 years, and he reigned for 25 years.

HIS CHARACTER was pious, prudent, enterprising. He was a skilful general, a wise statesman, a courageous reformer. He "was alone counted worthy in later ages to rank with Hezekiah and Josiah among the most pious rulers of the Davidic line." — *Farrar.*

HIS REIGN was among the best and most prosperous in all Judah's existence. His great error, equally with his success, points out to us the way of true prosperity.

HE HAD A GREAT ADVANTAGE in having a religious father, who had done much toward reforming his kingdom, and uplifting his people. A good inheritance of virtue and religion is one of the greatest blessings ever bestowed upon a young man.

APPLICATION. A lesson from the Mikado of Japan who "claims to have received the symbol of his imperial power from the divine founder of the nation. The symbol, which is preserved in an ancient shrine near Tokio, consists of three articles — a mirror, a crystal, and a sword.

"*The mirror* represents His Majesty's conscience; when he looks in that he sees the ruler of 43,000,000 of people, and is reminded of his responsibilities.

"*The crystal* is the emblem of purity; when he looks at that he is reminded of what his personal character should be.

"*The sword* is the emblem of power; when he looks at that he is reminded of the authority and dignity of his office and of the power that is placed in his hands to maintain the right and correct the wrong." — *London S. S. Chronicle.*

II. **Jehoshaphat Strengthens His Country's Defences.** — Vs. 1, 2, 12. **And strengthened himself against Israel** because there had been wars with Israel (2 Chron. 16: 1, 9), there having been a long rivalry between them, which was renewed in a border warfare during the last days of Asa. Baasha king of Israel had not only attacked Judah,

2. And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of E'phră-ĭm, [1] which Asa his father had taken.

3. And the LORD was with Je-hŏsh'a-phăt, because he walked in the first ways [a] of his father David, and sought not unto the Bā'al-ĭm;

4. But [but] sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after [2] the doings of Israel.

5. Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah [3] [b] brought to Je-hŏsh'a-phăt presents; [4] and he had riches and honour in abundance.

[1] 2 Chron. 15: 8.
[2] 1 Kings 12: 28.
[3] 1 Sam. 10: 27; 1 Kings 10: 25.
[4] 1 Kings 10: 27; 2 Chron. 18: 1.
[a] Or, *of his father*, and *of David.*
[b] Heb., *gave.*

but had fortified Ramah, a town only a few miles north of Jerusalem. The warrior Ahab was on the throne of Israel when Jehoshaphat began to reign.

We are reminded of the border warfare so long continued between the Scotch Highlanders and Lowlanders.

2. Placed forces, "arsenals for the supply of war material," as well as soldiers. **In all the fenced,** fortified, **cities. Set garrisons,** probably food supplies with leaders to take charge of obtaining and caring for them.

12. Castles, fortified palaces or residences for the commander and his officers. **And cities of store,** fortified towns with all kinds of military supplies of food, weapons and equipment.

2. In the cities of Ephraim, over the border, an enlargement of Judah by capture during the border warfare (2 Chron. 15: 8).

LESSONS. No persons have more need of business ability and sagacity than those who manage the temporal affairs of religion.

The ladder which reaches to God has its base on the earth, and it needs a good foundation.

He who would do the most and the best work for God should be as careful of his physical health and strength as the athlete who wishes to win a game.

One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the new degree in which business men are bringing all their energy, skill, training and wealth to the solution of the moral and religious problems that confront us.

The Laymen's Movement for Missions. The Young People's Missionary Movement. The business side of the Chapman Revival work, leaving him to give himself wholly to the spiritual. The Campaign for raising $500,000 in Boston just completed at this writing. The movements for civic righteousness, and better governed cities. All these have been wonderfully well conducted, and are making rapid strides because of the way consecrated business men have entered into the work.

III. **The Religious Life of the King.** — Vs. 3, 4, 6. **And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because** Jehoshaphat stood for the things which God loved and wished to do for the nation. The Lord cannot in this sense be with those whose whole life and conduct are opposed to all God wants to accomplish. This was shown by the fact known to all that **he walked in the first ways of his father David.** The Greek translation omits "David." The reference then might be to the beautiful life David lived before his fall and restoration, but probably to his father Asa, who began his reign by devotion to Jehovah, **and sought not unto Baalim,** the false and impure idols of the heathen.

4. But sought to the Lord God of his father. He sought to be like, to receive the aid of, to spread the knowledge of, to learn his duty from, the Lord God.

Walked in his commandments as the rule of his own life, as the aim of his reign for the people. **Not after the doings of Israel,** who set up images as the means of worshiping God.

"Who cares not to be great
But as he saves or serves the state."

Jehoshaphat had need to have God with him, as the Holy Spirit was with the apostles after Pentecost making them mighty with divine power, — for he had a great task before him, greater than the seven labors of Hercules.

6. And his heart [a] was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover and furthermore [1] he took away the high places and groves the Ash'er-im out of Judah.

9. [2] And they taught in Judah, and had having the book of the law of the LORD with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people.

[1] 1 Kings 22 : 43; 2 Chron. 15: 17. [2] 2 Chron. 35: 3. *a* That is, *was encouraged.*

6. His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. *Margin*, "encouraged." Lifted up above worldly considerations and fears, filled with high motives and enthusiasms, in the cause of God, as in the case of the apostles who when filled with the Spirit joyfully went on in their hard task against all the powers of Jewish Sanhedrims and Roman emperors. He was lifted up into union with God.

ILLUSTRATION. "The greatest tragic poet of Greece has left a description of the battle of Salamis. The Persian ships, many and strong, in double crescent lines, blockaded Piræus Harbor. The Athenian vessels, few in number, were crowded within it. When the sun had set, the night before the battle, the commanders of both fleets went from ship to ship rousing the courage of the soldiers by brave words. Doing that, Æschylus called 'comforting' the soldiers," lifting their hearts above all fears.

Jehoshaphat, like all other men was not perfect. All God's work through men is done with imperfect instruments, but the nearer perfection they are, the better work God can do through them. The great mistake of Jehoshaphat's life was not his being a friend to Ahab, and seeking to live at peace with him, but his making so close an alliance as to injure both kingdoms. He joined Ahab in an unnecessary war; and he married his son to the heathen daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. It was doubtless done with the good motive of uniting the divided nation into one kingdom again. It was a beautiful vision and glorious hope. "The church and the world were delightfully at one." But it was an almost fatal alliance, for it led to religious and moral declension, and to the almost total extinction of the royal family.

"And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD" (2 Chron. 19: 2).

This failure of Jehoshaphat was but a side issue, an eddy in the current of his life, and infinitely less deadly than such sin as Ahab's which was the rottenness of the whole being. And yet it left its indelible mark. Every sin leaves a stain on our character and usefulness.

"Stand like a knight in armor
When sin assaileth thee;
One error makes life less fruitful
And glorious than it should be.

"For the knowledge of sin is deadly,
And leaves on the soul a stain.
A bird with a broken pinion
Never soars as high again."
—*Hezekiah Butterworth.*

On the other hand let us not be counted among "those who prefer remembrance of accidental errors to gratitude for splendid services."

IV. **The Resultant Prosperity.**—Vs. 5, 10–13; 2 Chron. 18: 1; 20: 29, 30. 1. THE KINGDOM ON A FIRM FOUNDATION, v. 5. **Therefore**, as the natural fruit and result of the prevalence of the true religion, **the Lord**, who controls and guides the affairs of men, and is in the working of all moral and natural law, **stablished the kingdom in his hand**, the hand of a king who was "working together with God." There is no other way of establishing any kingdom or nation than to build it on the Rock of Obedience to God.

2. THE PEOPLE SUSTAINING THEIR RULER. **And all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents**, to show him honor and respect, and to help make the kingdom honored by the surrounding nations. These presents were free-will offerings in addition to their taxes. So as Christianity deepens and increases, and works out more fully its true nature, with this progress more and larger gifts are made to our country for its perfection, gifts for colleges, libraries, schools, hospitals, parks, education, missions, social betterments, etc., etc.

3. WEALTH. **And he had riches and honour in abundance.** All the means necessary for his various works for the good of the land, and for making known by visible results the blessings that flow from Obedience to God.

4. HONOR AND RESPECT FROM THE SURROUNDING NATIONS, v. 10. **And the fear of the Lord.** Reverence, awe, respect, fear to oppose. **Fell upon all the kingdoms . . .**

10. And [1]the [a]fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Je-hŏsh'a-phăt.

11. [Also *some*] [And some] tribute silver: and silver for tribute; the A-rā'bĭ-ans [also] brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred [he goats, he-goats].

12. And Je-hŏsh'a-phăt waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles and cities of store.

13. And he had [much business, many works] in the cities of Judah: and [the] men of war, mighty men of valour, [*were*] in Jerusalem.

[1] Gen. 35: 5. [2] 2 Sam. 8: 2. *a* Or. *a terror from the LORD.*

that were round about Judah, who before this had invaded and ravaged the land again and again, when there was no such fear. The fortresses and defences Jehoshaphat had made in his desire to protect his country, but not for mere personal display, no doubt intensified this fear. **So that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.** And since Jehoshaphat made no attacks on them, as was right for a man of God, "the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel" (2 Chron. 20: 29, 30). More than this, they too brought presents of peace.

5. BUSINESS AND WORK FOR THE PEOPLE, v. 13. **He had much business** R.V., "Many works," such as castles, store cities, garrison stations, and fortifying border towns. This would distribute among the people some of the riches the king received.

While it is an evil to have such immense fortunes as some here have, yet this wealth is not buried and idle as in oriental countries, but is almost all invested in works for the good of the people, and these works keep multitudes employed.

Three Lessons. FIRST. There is a connection between godliness and prosperity. We cannot conceive of a good God making, whether in the material or spiritual realm, laws which do not bring good to those who obey them. There are blessings which come upon the just and the unjust alike, and troubles and sufferings which both good and bad endure. And it is both Old Testament and New Testament teaching that you cannot measure any man's goodness or badness by the misfortunes that come to him. But it is also true in both Testaments that obedience to God's laws brings good to individuals, and to communities, and that disobedience is the way to ruin. "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov. 10: 22).

The best community is not Christian because it is prosperous, but prosperous because it is Christian.

A CHRISTIAN TOWN. Little Hettie had a model village, and she never tired of setting it up.

"What kind of a town is that, Hettie?" asked her father.

"O, a Christian town," Hettie answered, quickly.

"Suppose we make it a heathen town," her father suggested. "What must we take out?"

"The church," said Hettie, taking it to one side.

"Is that all?"

"I suppose so."

"No indeed," her father said. "The public school must go. Take the public library out also."

"Anything else?" Hettie asked sadly.

"Isn't that a hospital over there?"

"But, father, don't they have hospitals?"

"Not in heathen countries. It was Christ who taught us to care for the sick and the old."

"Then I must take out the Old Ladies' Home," said Hettie, very soberly.

"Yes, and that Orphans' Home at the other end of the town."

"Why, father," Hettie exclaimed, "then how little of the best is left!" — *Epworth Herald* (slightly varied).

SECOND. One of the most influential attractions to the Gospel of Jesus is the fruit it bears in the persons and communities who live the Gospel. And people will always judge of a religion by what it does for those who follow it.

"My point is this, that God, although omnipotent, may sometimes need our help.

"The world is moderately full of people who estimate the value of religion by its effect upon the lives of those who profess it; indeed, in the last analysis I suppose we all do that, and must do so. Do you remember Kipling's word:

('By all ye will or whisper, by all ye leave or do,
The sullen, silent peoples will WEIGH YOUR GOD AND YOU'?)

So I give you the thought for whatever it is worth, that even the great and good God may be very glad to have people who know us better than they know Him, so living and so testifying, that even His promises shall be more certain because of our indorsement."—*Unknown.*

The whole story of the Kings is the story of a people whom God was training to be as "a city set on a hill" to attract the nations of the world to the true God. Here too is a missionary lesson for us.

THIRD. THE VALUE OF PROSPERITY TO THOSE WHO WILL USE IT RIGHTLY, if honestly obtained, lies in the power to use it for every good cause. It is a mighty instrument for good. The general wealth of the community is much better than great wealth in the hands of a few; for so many more can have the privilege of giving.

V. **Jehoshaphat's Campaign of Reform.**—V. 6; 2 Chron 19: 3–11; 20: 33. FIRST. RELIGIOUS REFORM. V. 6. **Moreover he took away the high places.** Altars and places of worship on wooded hilltops, where there were also idols for worship. These places were near towns, and convenient for the gatherings of the people for pleasure, and social worship, which was often of the most licentious character. **And the groves,** more correctly as in R. V. Asherim, wooden poles or posts representing the female goddess Ashteroth i. e., Astarte, corresponding to the Greek Venus, the goddess of love and beauty.

It must be remembered that there were two ways of using these high places, one for heathen worship with its impure rites, the other for the worship of Jehovah. But the use of these heathen places with their evil associations, for the worship of the true God, tended to debase that worship, and corrupt it with heathen rites and immorality.

NOTE. It is twice said that "the high places were not taken away" (2 Chron. 20: 33, 1 Kings 22: 43). There is no contradiction, for as in all such reforms there are reactions wherever "the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers" (2 Chron. 20: 33). Take the case of local prohibition in towns and cities. The reform voters succeed in driving out the saloons one year. In many cases, the next year, or a few years later the saloons are permitted to return. In no case is liquor completely banished, where "the people have not prepared their hearts" for total abstinence.

SECOND. CAMPAIGN OF BIBLE STUDY. Vs. 7–9. Early in his reign the king saw the necessity of religious education, if he would make his reforms effective. Hence he sent out his leading men, **princes,** and his religious leaders, **Levites, to teach in the cities of Judah** (home missions), **the book of the law of the Lord.**

Intelligent religion is the only kind that will be powerful for character and usefulness.

This is the business of the Sunday School and its teachers, to make intelligent Christians; conversion and culture.

Altar on the High Place Above Petra.

1. "To train men to know something; 2, to train men to do something; 3, to train men to be something," as President Hadley expresses the work of the college.

TRAIN *the scholars to study at home.*

I never can be thankful enough that I was brought up in an atmosphere intensely religious, literary, and educational, both theoretical and practical, with a mother who had a gift for telling Bible stories, and for helping us to

put the Bible teachings into practice; with Bible reading and prayer five times a day — morning and evening chapters read each by himself; family prayers morning and evening, and a little Bible séance with mother before going to school.

The Christian Endeavor pledge as to the Bible is a fine thing for our young people.

"THERE ARE THREE THINGS, and only three, that are absolutely essential to spiritual health and strength and growth. These three things are: Constant Bible study, constant prayer, and constant effort for the salvation of others. Where these three things are there will be spiritual health, spiritual growth, spiritual strength. When any one of these three things is lacking, there will be spiritual deterioration, spiritual disease, spiritual weakness, spiritual death." —*Dr. R. A. Torrey.*

BIBLE STUDY IN Y. M. Christian Associations "is the dynamic force of every live Association. It vitalizes all other phases of our work and gives Association leaders their perspective and vision. When this department is strong all other departments usually flourish. Where the Bible work is weak, there is little incentive to aggressive work in any line." — *Two States.*

Possible Horned Astarte. From Gaser. Clay Figure of Astarte. Found at Taanach.

LIGHT SAFER THAN BLINDS. "Light is a better protection than any amount of barricades. Formerly, when men left their business places at night, they turned off the light and put up great shutters. To-day they have learned that their greatest safeguard against enemies is to pull back the blinds, and keep a bright light constantly burning. For years, many thought it necessary to defend the teaching of Jesus, when all that his teaching needed was the clear light of day so that men and women could see what it really was." — *Editor of S. S. Times.*

THIRD. CIVIC REFORMS (2 Chron. 19: 5–11). The natural fruit of more and better religion, was a better governed country, more care for the rights of the people, stricter justice between man and man.

One need of our day is the arousing of every sentiment, and feeling against civic unrighteousness; the awakening of the whole people to a zeal in favor of all that makes for the good of the whole people. For "Feeling and emotion are the chief sources, the well springs, of action in life, . . . indeed the will itself is so largely made up of the emotional element that it is doubtful if it could exist without it." — *Dr. T. K. Shaw* in the *London Lancet.*

We are to inspire this emotion and zeal, till every one of the many evils in our land is removed; till from the individual and from the country we find

> "Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion killed,
> Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert tilled."

And we can adopt as our own hope,

> "Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so silver fair
> Yearn, and clasp the hands, and murmur, would to God that we were there."

VI. **His Missionary Campaign.** — 2 Chron. 19: 4. **And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba,** in the southern part of his kingdom 40 miles south of Jerusalem in the less populated districts, **to mount Ephraim,** within the boundaries of the northern kingdom; **and**

brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers. He made as thorough work as he could, for not only did the people need this civic and religious reform, but their reformation helped his own people to be true to the God of their fathers. Missionary work for others is the salvation and progress of the church at home.

" Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul
May keep the path, but will not reach the goal.
While he who walks in love may wander far,
Yet God will bring him where the blessed are."

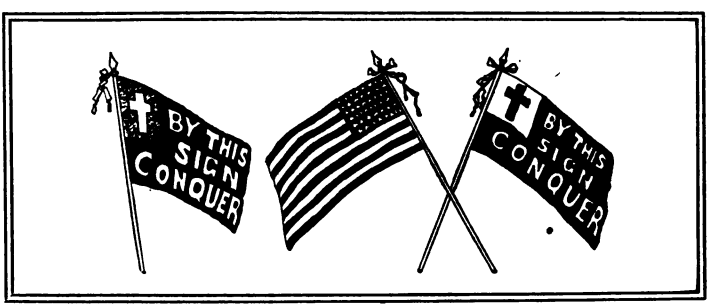
It is said that once a legislature objected to foreign missions, because we had no religion to export. Dr. Van Dyke said in regard to it, that if their plan had prevailed we would have had no religion for ourselves.

An article in a recent magazine says that it is " no part of China's business to give us her religion, and it is not our business to give China our religion." But it is our business to give her our religion if we have a better one than she has. The long quiet work of the missionaries, like bulbs underground in spring, is now bursting from the soil in bud and flower for the awakening of China into new life.

THE STORY OF THE CONQUEST FLAG.

The symbol of the Missionary Aspect of the Sunday School and the recital of the coming Campaign for Missions, this autumn, which MUST touch and rouse every active Christian soul, is timely material for the Sunday School.

" One day in July, 1901, four young men met at luncheon in Chicago and agreed to pray for an uprising of Christian forces to win the world for Christ. When the body of



the martyred President McKinley was being borne down the aisle of the Canton Church, and all noises were hushed, and more people were engaged in prayer than ever before in any single moment in human history, one of those four young men conceived the design of a flag that was to be the emblem of the uprising for which they prayed. He called it the Conquest Flag because it was designed to rally, unite, lead and inspire God's people for the conquest of the world.

" Its colors were red, white and blue. On the smaller field of white was placed a BLOOD-RED CROSS to stand for the central fact, doctrine and power of our religion, the center and rallying point of all Christians. On the larger field of blue were the words,

BY THIS SIGN CONQUER.

" That was a little more than eight years ago. What has been the response? There has been accorded to this conquest emblem such a reception and increasing use as has never before been accorded to any other Christian emblem. The conquest flag is now in use in every state in the Union; in every county of many states; in every province of Canada; in every continent; and in every denomination of Christians. It has been officially adopted by twenty-one states and provincial Sunday School associations.

" When the 'Grosser Kurfürst' left New York harbor bearing the North American delegates to the World's Sunday School Convention at Jerusalem, manifestly she could not sail under any of the national flags of the countries represented. There was a flag, how-

ever, that was the emblem of the kingdom that included them all. A large bunting conquest flag flew from her mainmast as she entered upon her long voyage, as she put into various Mediterranean ports, and as she came sailing home again. At Athens a service was held on Mars' Hill, and on that historic spot there was planted the original silk conquest flag. When the Sunday School pilgrims met in the Methodist Church in Rome three flags were unfurled, that of the United States on the left, the conquest flag on the right, with the flag of Italy between them.

"In recent years hundreds of great conventions have gathered in buildings ablaze with flags. The central decoration has been the conquest linked with the national flag, saying in effect, to all, 'Our land for Christ.' About these buildings have been the flags of the nations, each linked with the conquest flag, saying to all, 'All lands for Christ.'" — *Compiled by Rev. W. W. Smith, M.D., of the New York Sunday School Commission.*

VII. **The Hallelujah Victory.** — 2 Chronicles 20. In this chapter there is told the story of Jehoshaphat's wonderful victory over a great army from the south which had reached Tekoa, within ten miles of Jerusalem. It was in answer to prayer. Jehoshaphat's army marched forward singing Hallelujahs with mighty voices; but before they reached the enemy there occurred a wild confusion in the enemy's ranks, as when Gideon's army made a midnight attack on the Midianites. The unorganized tribes, among whom, as ever in the East, there existed feuds innumerable and fierce, turned their hands against one another. In this savage, blind struggle multitudes of them perished, and the rest escaped, so that Jehoshaphat's army had only to collect the enormous spoil of rich accoutrements, "more than they could carry away." Before returning, however, they met in the Valley of Blessing (Berachah), and held a great thanksgiving service.

Such a victory are the armies of Jesus Christ to have over all the principalities and powers of evil. It is for us to sing praises, and live thanksgiving songs, and march on, and while we do this in faith, God is, in strange ways and unexpected, throwing the ranks of evil doers into confusion, both in our own land and among the heathen. We are drawing near the valley of blessing. Praise before the victory.

One of the great organizations for classes of young men is named "Baraca" after this victory and this valley of blessing.

"Then blessings untold from Bĕrā'châh ascend;
And trumpet and cornet and cithara blend
With tabret and dulcimer, sackbut and shalm,
In Zion's Hosanna, her rapturous psalm.
And nations are awed at Jehovah's dread might,
Whose arm overwhelming fought Israel's fight;
And ages his honor and rest shall record,
Who dared leave his battle alone with the Lord."
—*George Lansing Taylor, D.D., Ridgefield, Conn.*

LESSON VI. — February 5.

ELIJAH THE PROPHET APPEARS IN ISRAEL.

1 Kings 17.

PRINT vs. 1-16. COMMIT vs. 14-16.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*— PSA. 34: 10.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

As we bring before our scholars one of the four greatest men in Old Testament history, it may be well to call their attention to this fact which Wendell Phillips used with great effect. "In that great argument, which gave us the two most consummate orations of antiquity, the question was whether Athens should grant Demosthenes a crown. He had fled from battle, and his counsels, though heroic, brought the city to ruin. Demosthenes' speech is the masterpiece of all eloquence. Of the accusation by Æschines it is praise enough to say that it stands second only to that. In it Æschines warns the Athenians that in granting crowns they judged themselves and were forming the characters of their children."

"You know well that it is not music, nor the gymnasium, nor the schools that mold young men; it is much more the public proclamations, the public example. If you

take one whose life has no high purpose,—one who mocks at morals,—and crown him in a theatrum, every boy who sees it is corrupted. . . . The character of a city is determined by the character of the men it crowns." We become like those who are crowned in our hearts. We should therefore embalm in our memories the facts which make Elijah one of our great heroes to admire, to love.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

Name the places, and trace on the map the journeys of Elijah in the lesson.

This lesson can be treated as a series of moving pictures. Tell what picture each of the incidents presents to your mind.

LEARN BY HEART.

V. 16; Matt. 10: 41, 42; Luke 12: 24.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

A'hab; Chĕ'rĭth (ch = k); Elī'jāh; Ethbā'ăl; Gĭl'ĕăd; Tĭsh'bĕ; Tĭsh'bīte; Zăr'ĕphăth; Zī'dŏn.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The adjectives which best describe the character of Elijah.
Compare Elijah with John the Baptist. (See Matt. 11: 14; 17: 10–13.)
Under what circumstances does Elijah appear alive, in the New Testament, 900 years later?
What have we learned about the kingdom of Israel that shows the need of such a reformer as Elijah?
How was the famine a punishment for sin?
What do you learn from this lesson about Divine Providence, and man's faith?

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Nameless Women of the Bible, by Theron Brown, "The Widow of Zarephath" (Tract Soc.). *To-day in Syria and Palestine*, by W. E. Curtis, pp. 203–239 on Elijah (Revell). Tuck's *Revelation by Character* "Elijah." Geikie's *Holy Land and the Bible*, on Cherith, rain in Palestine, Sarepta. *Elijah* by Wm. M. Taylor, by Howatt, by Milligan.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Elijah lived during the reigns of Ahab in Israel, and Jehoshaphat in Judah, and their successors. B.C. 920–900 (or Assyrian, 878–857).

Place. — Various places in the kingdom of Israel. He probably first met Ahab in Samaria his capital.

Cherith was a brook in a ravine flowing into the Jordan on the East.

Zarephath was a town in Phenicia between Tyre and Sidon, seaports on the Mediterranean.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Elijah and the Famine to Save Israel from Ruin.

I. THE KINGDOM ON THE VERGE OF RUIN (v. 1).

II. DECISIVE ACTIONS TO SAVE THE NATION (v. 1).

III. WAITING FOR THE FAMINE TO DO ITS WORK. CHERITH (vs. 2–7).

IV. STILL WAITING. ZAREPHATH (vs. 8–26).

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, III., 2, §§ 26, 27. "The cruse of oil that does not fail." Mrs. Charles' poem, "Is thy cruse of comfort failing?" *The Poet's Bible*, "Old Test." has several poems on Elijah (*Ward & Lock, London*). A reference to Elijah and the ravens in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, Act II., Sc. iii., l. 185. Read Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, "The Famine." Geo. Lansing Taylor's poem, *Elijah the Reformer* (Funk and Wagnalls).

THE LESSON IN ART.

Elijah, by Sargent * and by Burne-Jones. *Elijah fed by ravens*, by W. Allston * in Boston Art Museum. *Elijah restoring the widow's son*, by Doré. *The Brook Cherith.**

* In Wilde's Bible pictures.

I. The Kingdom on the Verge of Ruin. — Recall the state of things, as to religion under Ahab, in Lesson IV. The rapid survey there leaves out much of the internal history of the kingdom. But the author of the Book of Kings seems to have incorporated into his narrative a little prophetic volume containing the biography of two mighty prophets, —

1. And [a] Elijah the Tĭsh'bīte, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gĭl'e-ăd, said unto Ahab, [1] *As* the LORD, the God of Israel, liveth, [2] before whom I stand, [3] there shall not be dew nor rain [4] these years, but according to my word.

[1] 2 Kings 3: 14. [2] Deut. 10: 8. [3] Jas. 5: 17. [4] Luke 4: 25. *a* Heb., *Elijahu*, Luke 1: 17; 4: 25, he is called *Elias*.

Elijah and Elisha, — which by its search-light rays illumines the inner life of the nation. This life is full of instruction.

It was a dark day for Israel when Jezebel, "set herself, with her husband's tacit connivance, to extirpate the religion of Jehovah from the land of Israel, and to substitute in its place open and avowed paganism, — the worship of Ashtoreth and of Baal. Splendid shrines were built, especially one of vast size in the capital (1 Kings 16: 32; 2 Kings 10: 21); and the rites and ceremonies of the new cult were exhibited on a grand scale, with sensuous accompaniments of all kinds, — music, statuary, processions of robed priests, victims, incense, bands of fanatics worked up to frenzy by religious excitement, and the like." —*Rawlinson*. They had "forsaken thy covenants, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword" (1 Kings 19: 10).

From a Photograph.

Gilgal, Plain of Jericho.

ILLUSTRATION. Prof. Henry Drummond in his *Tropical Africa*, has a chapter on "The White Ant," which lives on wood, and unseen eats out the heart of the tree as soon as it ceases to live. "You build your house, perhaps, and for a few months fancy you have pitched upon the one solitary site in the country where there are no white ants. But one day suddenly the doorpost totters, and lintel and rafter come down together with a crash. You look at a section of the wrecked timbers, and discover that the whole inside has been eaten clean away. The apparently solid logs of which the rest of the house is built are now mere cylinders of bark, and through the thickest of them you could push your little finger." Such is a picture of the kingdom of Ahab when Elijah appeared to save the nation. [Its heart was eaten out by idolatry and immorality.]

At the same time we must remember that there were seven thousand true worshipers of Jehovah, and among them at least a hundred prophets or teachers, and one statesman (1 Kings 18: 3, 13; 19: 18). Except Obadiah, these were in hiding like the Huguenots in France. They had no power to stem the tide which was rushing downward like the rapids of Niagara. But they were like seeds in the winter soil, waiting for the springtime to come.

II. Decisive Actions to Save the Nation. First. A Brave Strong Prophet Dared to Stem the Tide Alone. — V. 1. And he dared because he knew that God had commanded him, and stood with him, and worked through him. **Elijah** (Greek form "Elias") = *Jehovah is God*. Either given him by his parents as an expression of their faith, and perhaps of their hope of better times; or a "striking coincidence between the name and the career which does not disprove the historical character of the man, as appears from *Winfield* Scott, *Victor* Emmanuel," Queen *Victoria*. **The Tishbite.** A *Thisbe* is known in northern Galilee. **Of the inhabitants of Gilead**, a mountainous region east of the Jordan, the mountains ranging from 1,500 to 2,500 feet above the sea level, presenting a rugged and barren appearance, though with fertile valleys and rich pasturage. It was noted for being the home of Jephthah (Judg. 11: 1) and of Elijah. Also for its rich balsam, "the balm of Gilead." "Its hills were covered with shaggy forests; its awful solitudes were only broken by the dash of mountain streams; its valleys were the

haunt of fierce wild beasts." — *F. B. Meyer.* Its inhabitants were the Highlanders of Palestine, Israelites, but akin to the Bedouin, strong, hardy, temperate, swift; Elijah was a typical mountaineer.

It is probable that Elijah belonged to the northern kingdom but was living in Gilead, (the Hebrew for **inhabitants** may be translated "sojourners" as in R.V.), and that the parents of Elijah, or Elijah himself when a young man, had gone from Galilee to Gilead to escape the persecutions of the Baalites, and its dangerous moral deterioration.

HIS APPEARANCE. "He was, tradition tells us, a man of short stature, of rugged countenance. He was 'a lord of hair' — the thick, black locks of the Nazarite (for such he probably was) streamed over his shoulders like a lion's mane, giving him a fierce and unkempt aspect. His brown limbs, otherwise bare, were covered with a heavy mantle, the skin of a camel or a sheep worn with the rough wool outside, and tightened round his loins by a leathern girdle." — *Farrar.* Such was the dress of his successor, John the Baptist (Matt. 3: 4). Compare the appearance of Peter the Hermit, who preached the first crusade, bare-footed, bare-headed, and emaciated by self-inflicted tortures. This prophet's garb added to his power.

HIS CHARACTER. Reared amid these exalted and solemnizing scenes, the young prophet must have meditated long on the glorious past of his country, and must have been filled with horror as tidings came of the introduction of rankest heathenism, of Jezebel's abominations, the fierce cruelties and reeking licentiousness of Ahab's idolatrous capital. Indignation burned within him like the flames of Vesuvius or Martinique, till it suddenly burst forth upon the king and his court.

"He was a clean-limbed, frugal-lived man, who gathered up his skirts about him, we are told, and ran straight away sixteen miles before the chariot of Ahab, from Carmel to the entering in of Jezreel; a calm, quiet, courageous, firm-principled man; bred so in the desert with God." — *Robert E. Speer, D.D.*

ELIJAH MEETS AHAB. "He was the launching of a force straight from the hand and heart of God."

"As it was in the days of Noah, so was it also in the days of Ahab. Suddenly in the midst of the eating and drinking, the marrying and the giving in marriage, as unexpected as a peal of thunder from a clear sky, the embodied wrath of Jehovah stood before the idolatrous king." — *Professor Burnham.* So John the Baptist stood before Herod.

So Milton defines the purpose of his life when he replies to those who said he exulted over fallen majesty, "I only preferred Queen Truth to King Charles."

ILLUSTRATION. "There is a story in the life of Dr. Schauffler's father that illustrates how even to-day men can rise up into just such fearlessness. The old man in Constantinople was being bothered a great deal by what he believed to be Russian machinations against the Protestant missions in the empire, and he went to see the Russian ambassador. 'Mr. Schauffler,' said the ambassador, 'I will say to you frankly that my master, the Czar of all the Russias, will never suffer Christian missions to set their feet in the Turkish Empire.' The old missionary looked at him for a moment and then replied, 'Your excellency, my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, will never ask the Czar of all the Russias where He may set His feet.' And he went on with his mission unintimidated by any agencies working in the dark against him, because he was confident that the living God Whose work he was doing would achieve for him His own victory." — *Robert E. Speer, D.D.*

The Second Decisive Action. The Long Famine. For Punishment and Reform. — V. 1. **As the Lord God of Israel liveth.** "Lord" when printed in capitals is the translation of "Jehovah" the covenant God of Israel, who had in the past done such wonders for them. Their whole past history was the record of his works. **Before whom I stand,** as his officer, and servant, clothed with his authority.

There shall not be dew nor rain these years. The power of this message was greatly increased by the fact that the Lord God of Israel had forewarned the nation that famine would be one of the punishments for idolatrous apostasy, and disobedience: —

"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

(Here follows a long list of calamities)

"And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

"Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and

overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee" (Deut. 28).

But according to my word. Revealed to him by Jehovah. "This was saying: 'The God whom you have forsaken will take away the covenant blessings promised to those who truly serve him, and see now if your nature god can give you either rain or harvests.' The nation must learn the impotence of Baal before it will reverence the might of Jehovah."

NOTE that the famine was a symbol or emblem of the spiritual famine from which the nation was suffering.

THE PURPOSE OF PUNISHMENT is to make the world better, and to make the individual better.

Avoid the wrong of attempting to measure any one's sin by the amount of his sufferings. This is forbidden in the Old Testament by the Book of Job; and in the New by Jesus.

At the same time it is an even greater wrong to deny that the fruit of sin is sorrow and ruin. Even Christ while guarding us against misjudging character by suffering, goes on to say, "but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13: 1–5).

From a Photograph by Wilson.

The Brook Cherith.

A virtuous and temperate community will be more prosperous in every way than a vicious, drunken, idle, dishonest community. Take young men as a class, and those who keep free from vices and intemperance, who are diligent, honest, and religious, stand the best chance for worldly success. And this is the promise of God, both in the Old Testament and the New. It is the fruit also of God's laws in nature. And this is necessary in order to prove that God is on the side of goodness.

> "Howe'er we trust to mortal things,
> Each hath its pair of folded wings;
> Though long their terrors rest unspread,
> Their fatal plumes are never shed;
> At last, at last, they stretch in flight,
> And blot the day and blast the night!"
> — *O. W. Holmes*, "After the Fire."

"I know no poem since Macbeth that so portrays the agony of an awakened conscience as Browning's 'Pippa Passes.'"—*President Stanley Hall*, in "A Study of Fears." See also Hawthorne's "Mosses from an Old Manse," vol. ii., "The Bosom Serpent," where the chief character continually exclaims, "It gnaws me"; Hood's Poems, "Eugene Aram"; the Legend of the Troll in the preface to Hall Caine's "The Bondman."

"The work of the Avenger is a necessity. It is part of God's philanthropy. There are hells on earth into which no breath of Heaven can ever come; these must be swept away. There are social soils in which only unrighteousness can flourish; these must be broken up.

"And that is the work of the Day of Vengeance. When is that day? It is now. Who is the Avenger? Law. What Law? Criminal Law, Sanitary Law, Social Law, Natural Law. Wherever the poor are trodden upon or tread upon one another; wherever the air is poison and the water foul; wherever want stares, and vice reigns, and rags rot — there the Avenger takes his stand. . . .

"The very nature of things is God's Avenger; the very story of civilization is the history of Christ's Throne."—*Prof. Henry Drummond* in *The Program of Christianity*.

Now all this is not to harm men. It is not cruelty. It is not a desire to see people

2. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

3. Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Chē'rĭth, that *is* before Jordan.

4. And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Chē'rĭth, that *is* before Jordan.

6. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7. And it came to pass [a] after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

a Heb., *at the end of days.*

suffer. It is the means of keeping men from sin. It is a motive to persuade men to repent. It is a way of saving the nation from ruin. When repentance comes it is safe to bring relief.

III. **Waiting for the Famine to Produce Its Effect. At the Brook Cherith.** — Vs. 2–7. After the announcement of the famine three and a half years (1 Kings 18: 1; Luke 4: 25) slowly passed away before Elijah again appeared before the king. But the silent work of these years was as essential as the announcement.

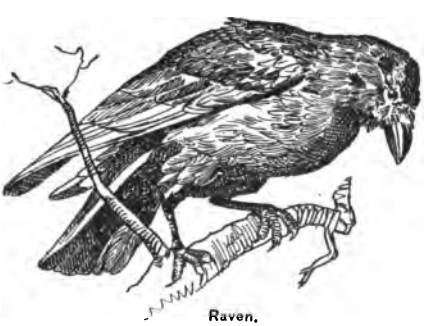
(1) The king himself must feel its effect, both in his own person, and in the indignation of the people against him for the sufferings they endured. No small power was required to persuade him to permit Elijah to enter upon his great reform, against the opposition of Jezebel. It was necessary for him to be convinced of the power of Jehovah and the weakness of Baal.

(2) It took a long time for the people to feel the need of the true God, and to learn that Baal could not help. Only "out of the depths" would they cry unto God. Only by a very bitter experience would they be ready to choose God, when Elijah set the choice before them.

(3) It is quite possible that the prophet himself had some lessons to learn in the hard school of Long Delays. It is hard to wait through a long winter for the good seed to germinate in the spring. Elijah was learning lessons of Faith. His thoughts and plans would gradually crystallize for action.

2. The word of the Lord came unto him. In what way we do not know. Perhaps in the ways his word comes to us. Perhaps in more vivid ways. But in either case he became sure that it was God's word.

ELIJAH AT CHERITH. **3. Get thee hence,** from Ahab's court. Longer parley would be useless, and would endanger Elijah's life. **Turn thee eastward.** Toward the Jordan and Gilead, his own country, most familiar and safe from pursuit. **Hide thyself.** Not in cowardice but in prudence, and that his prophecy might have time to fulfil itself. **The brook,** the torrent course or wady, full in the rainy season, dry in the summer, **Cherith,** whose location is unknown, except that it was **before Jordan,** i.e. probably on the east defended from Ahab by the Jordan, and hidden from the Israelites who might have betrayed him.



Raven.

A large bird, whose wings expand two feet.

4. Drink of the brook, where water would linger longest. **I have commanded the ravens to feed thee.** Three different modes of interpretation of this famous passage are possible: —

FIRST. Farrar and many critics think this is a highly poetic expression, a metaphor, "conveying the lesson that the prophet was maintained by marked interventions of that

8. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,
9. Arise, get thee to [1] Zăr'e-phăth, which *belongeth* belongeth to Zī'dŏn, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

[1] Obadiah 20; Luke 4: 26, called *Sarepta.*

providence of God which is itself in all its workings supernatural." It is like Christ's "where their worm dieth not"; or the Proverb (30: 17), "The eye that mocketh at his father . . . the ravens of the brook shall pick it out." This is perfectly possible, and consistent with the most devout belief in the inspiration of the Bible and in the miracles elsewhere recorded.

SECOND. The words may be taken literally. The raven is one of the commonest birds of Palestine. "It is a solitary bird, living in the wildest district that it can find, and especially preferring those that are intersected with hills." — *Wood's Nat. Hist.* Elijah was hiding in just such a region. "It is probably the most highly developed of all birds, quick-sighted, sagacious, and bold." It is perfectly possible in the providence of God that ravens should bring food to Elijah, and if they had nests near Elijah's place, it would be perfectly natural.

"Jerome in his life of Paul the hermit (§ 10) relates that a raven thus supplied the hermit's wants. Those who have watched the habits of large birds like the raven can bear witness to the large supply which they bring home under ordinary circumstances, and for Elijah's sustenance their natural energy was quickened." — *Cambridge Bible.*

THIRD. There are those who think that the Hebrew word for ravens should be translated "Arabians" or "Orebites" and that these neighbors brought food to Elijah secretly. How easily the word might be thus translated can be understood even by English readers. The original written Hebrew had consonants only, and no written vowels; but the vowels were supplied vocally from tradition, just as we learn which of the six sounds of A should be used in any given word. A thousand years or more after this story was written, some scribes, called Masoretes, wrote under the consonants the vowel points which represented the traditional sounds, just as if one should, in our books, put under or over the vowels the signs used in our dictionaries to represent the sounds we give them, as ā, ă, a, ā. But then as now there were doubtless differences of opinion as to the best pronunciation. The Masoretes decided in this case on the one which makes the three Hebrew consonants mean "raven." But several other Hebrew words have the same consonants. Thus

ORēB	ARōB	ARāB	ERēB	ERēB	ORBō, *name of a village;* in
raven	*gadfly*	*Arabian*	*foreigners*	*evening*	plural, *inhabitants of Orbo.*

So with three English consonants, different vowels entirely change the meaning, as T-N-S, might mean ToNeS, TuNeS, TiNeS, TiNS, TeNS, aToNeS, TeNSe, TuNiS.

ILLUSTRATION. A curious anecdote of ravens occurred many years ago at the Red Lion Inn, Hungerford, England. "Coming into the inn yard," says a gentleman who resided there, "my chaise ran over and bruised the leg of a favorite Newfoundland dog; and while we were examining the injury, Ralph, the raven, looked on also. The minute the dog was tied up under the manger with my horse, the raven not only visited him, but brought him bones, and attended him with particular marks of kindness."— *Bishop Stanley's History of Birds.*

"Nor is it a singular case,
The wonder is often renewed;
And many can say, to his praise,
He sends them by ravens their food;
Thus worldlings, though ravens indeed,
Though greedy and selfish their mind,
If God has a servant to feed,
Against their own wills can be kind.

"Thus Satan, that raven unclean,
Who croaks in the ears of the saints,
Compelled by a power unseen,
Administers oft to their wants;
God teaches them how to find food,
From all the temptations they feel;
This raven, who thirsts for my blood,
Has helped me to many a meal."
— *John Newton.*

LESSONS. (1) Elijah has learned how God can make nature help him in time of need. (2) He has learned more perfect trust. (3) He has learned patience, to wait till the time is ripe. "It is only a question of how to do things. You can do anything with nature if you only know how." — *Dr. Gregg.* God knows how. Nature, even ravens, and streams and drought, can teach us heavenly lessons.

IV. **Waiting for the Famine to Do Its Work. Experiences at Zarephath.** — Vs. 8–16. Having taken one course of lessons, God sends Elijah to another school. This was best not only that Elijah might learn other lessons, but in order that he might be safer. Ahab was seeking everywhere for him (1 Kings 18: 10), and in time his retreat

10. So he arose and went to Zăr'e-phăth: [And] and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, [the] a widow woman [was] was there gathering [of] of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11. And as she was going to fetch [it] it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12. And she said, [As] As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in [a] the barrel, and a little oil in [a] the cruse: and, behold, I [am] am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

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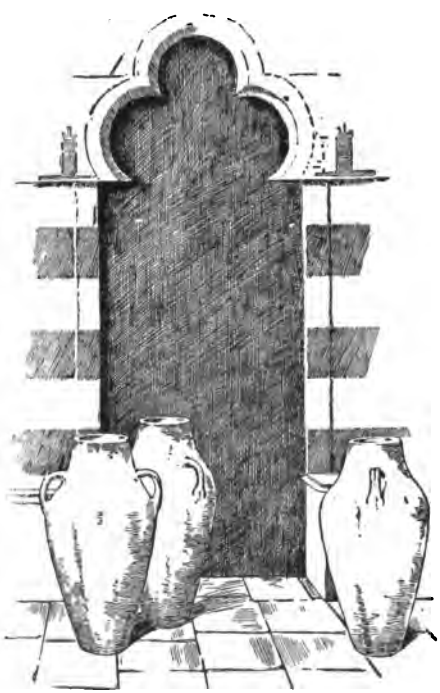
would be discovered, and then Ahab would doubtless have tortured him to compel him to give the word for rain.

9. Get thee to Zarephath. "The name (meaning *smelting house*) points to furnaces or workshops for the refining of metal." — *Pulpit Com.* Greek, *Sarepta* (Luke 4: 26). **Which belongeth to Zidon.** Doubtless the modern Arab village of *Sarafend*, on a promontory about eight miles south of Zidon. "In the middle of the present ruins, by the shore, stands a shrine of St. George, occupying the place of the Crusaders' Chapel, which was built on the traditional site of Elijah's upper room." — *Hastings' Dict.* Here may have lived another Gentile woman of great faith, the Syro-Phœnician whose daughter Christ healed (Matt. 15: 21–28). "The heights of Lebanon, with their many rivers and streams, must have supplied Phœnicia with water long after it had become scarce in Israel." Here in a retired spot in Jezebel's country, where Ahab would never think of looking, the prophet found safety and rest.

10. So he arose and went, northward toward Lebanon, thence to the west. But he kept outside of Ahab's dominion. **Came to the gate of the city.** Every town, large or small, required in those times a wall for defence. **The widow.** R. V., "a widow." **Gathering of sticks.** For her fire. **Fetch me . . . a little water.** His first need after his long walk through the famine-stricken land would be water. The gift of water to the thirsty is always regarded as a sacred duty in the East. "Never yet during many years' residence in Syria, and many a long day's travel, have I been refused a draught of water by a single individual of any sect or race. The Bedawy in the desert has shared with me the last drop in his water-skin." — *E. H. Porter.*



Water Jars.

NOTE the wisdom of this way of becoming acquainted, by asking a simple favor; as Christ asked the Samaritan woman for a drink from the well.

11. As she was going to fetch the water, Elijah **called to her, and said, Bring me . . . a morsel of bread.** This too was a modest request.

12. As the Lord thy God liveth. She lived not far from Israel, and probably recognized Elijah as an Israelite, by his dress and language. **I have not a cake.** "The more common bread used in all the interior, particularly in the rural districts, is a flat cake of unleavened dough, no thicker than a pancake, of a circular or oval form, and ten or twelve

13. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* forth unto me, and *afterward* make for thee and for thy son.

14. For thus saith the LORD, *the* God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD [a] sendeth rain upon the earth.

15. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat [b] *many* days.

16. *And the* barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake [c] by Elijah.

a Heb., *giveth.* *b* Or, *a full year.* *c* Heb., *by the hand of.*

inches in diameter." — *Van Lennep.* **An handful of meal in a barrel** (Am. V., jar) a large earthen jar. "Large jars were required for household provisions of wheat and barley. In New Testament times one variety was large enough to hold a man."—*Hastings' Bible Dict.* Recall the jars in the *Arabian Nights* in which the forty thieves were hidden. "Two large jars of sun-dried clay had a place in the meanest house, one for fetching the daily supply of water from the spring, . . . the other for holding the store of wheat or barley for the daily bread." — *Cheyne's Encyc. Bib.*

And a little oil. Olive oil, eaten with bread much as we eat butter. **A cruse,** a smaller jar with one or two handles.

Two sticks, a few, as we say, "two or three."

We may eat it, and die. She was in despair.

13. Elijah said . . . Fear not . . . make me thereof a little cake first. This would have been selfish had not Elijah known that the meal and oil would not fail. The request was also, for the widow, an education in faith. "According to your faith be it done unto you." All through the remaining years of the famine, she would need this training, as day by day she cooked the last visible handful of meal, and used the last drops of the oil. She as a widow may have needed the same faith for years to come.

14. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel. Elijah always pointed to the true God, and the promise fulfilled would lead her to worship and trust the Living God. And the prophet's daily walk and conversation would confirm her faith and draw her near to God.

15. She, and he, and her house. "She had enough for all their own needs and something over, which she could give to poorer relations." — *Cambridge Bible.* She had the blessing of giving as well as of receiving. For **many days.** The remaining days of the three and a half years of famine.

ELIJAH BRINGS BACK TO LIFE THE WIDOW'S SON (1 Kings 17: 17–24). The widow's faith was still further rewarded during Elijah's stay. One day her young son sickened and died. In the bitterness of her grief she cried out upon the prophet, thinking that his presence had directed God's special attention to her house, and this calamity had been sent her in punishment for her sins. Thereupon Elijah carried the lad to his own upper chamber, and stretched himself upon him as if to impart his own vitality, imploring God for his life. And God heard him; the soul returned to the boy's body, and he was delivered to his rejoicing mother, who testified eagerly her faith in the prophet as a man of God, and her faith in the divine messages he uttered.

LESSONS FROM THE ZAREPHATH EXPERIENCE.

1. Elijah suffered with the people. The reformer, the preacher, must partake of the sufferings of those whom he would help. Like Christ, he must be "tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He must gain the victory in the same kind of battles, and learn lessons in the same schools. He "learns that the mightiest of God's servants are just as dependent upon him in every way as the humblest and weakest of his people."

2. Notice how a poor woman on the very verge of starvation could help one of the greatest prophets that ever lived. Compare the story of the Mouse and the Lion.

3. "The highest glory of true religion, and what distinguishes it from false religion, is its power to minister" (*Matheson*) and the power to minister in small things, as Paul after the shipwreck picked up sticks for the fire. Compare Murillo's famous picture in the Louvre,

of the Angels in the Kitchen, or "The Miracle of San Diego," founded on the story of a monastery in which the friars were starving, but to whose aid angels came. The artist "shows us the interior of a convent kitchen; but doing the work there are not mortals in old dresses, but beautiful, white-winged angels. One serenely puts the kettle on the fire to boil, and one is lifting up a pail of water with heavenly grace, and one is at the kitchen dresser reaching up for plates; and I believe there is a little cherub running about and getting in the way, trying to help. . . . All are so busy, and working with such a will, and so refining the work as they do it that somehow you forget that pans are pans, and pots are pots, and only think of the angels, and how very natural and beautiful kitchen work is, — just what the angels would do, of course." — *William C. Gannett.*

4. All these experiences were preparing Elijah for his great work of reform. Every act of guidance from God, every strange experience unexpectedly working out good, every promise fulfilled, every prayer answered, culminating in the raising of the dead boy to life, increased the prophet's faith, strengthened his courage for the time when he must "beard the lion in his den," and arouse a whole people to new life.

5. The widow found the blessing of "entertaining angels unawares." She took into her home, and fed with her last crust, a rough looking, poorly clad foreigner, and found that her guest was a prophet of the living God, who bestowed upon her the greatest blessings of her life. "The only hope of the worst is from loving contact with the best." So we are taught that whosoever receives even a little child in the name of Jesus, receives the Lord himself.

THERE IS A TOUCHING POEM by Mrs. Emma Lent, "The Master is Coming," in which a woman is represented as preparing for the Master's coming, by being so busy in putting her house in the most exquisite order, that she had no time to comfort one who came to her in her sorrow, or to feed a hungry and weary cripple, or mother a little child who, bleeding and hungry and cold, knocked at her door. She turned them all away, saying "I am grieved and sorry, but I cannot help you to-day, for I look for a great and noble guest."

"Then the Master stood before me,
And his face was grave and fair: —
'Three times to-day I came to your door,
And craved your pity and care;
Three times you sent me onward,
Unhelped and uncomforted,
And the blessing you might have had was lost
And your chance to serve has fled.'

"'O, Lord, dear Lord, forgive me!
How could I know 'twas Thee?'
My very soul was shamed and bowed
In the depths of humility.
And He said, 'The sin is pardoned,
But the blessing is lost to thee;
For comforting not the least of Mine,
You have failed to comfort me.'"

6. It was through giving to Elijah out of her scanty store, that there came to her unfailing supplies. Even the greatest riches and talents lose their blessing and become a curse, unless used to help and bless others.

"Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine
It shall serve thee and thy brother.
Love divine will fill thy storehouse,
Or thy handful still renew.
Scanty fare for one will often
Make a royal feast for two.

"Numb and weary on the mountains,
Wouldst thou sleep amidst the snow?
Chafe that frozen form beside thee,
And together both shall glow.
Art thou stricken in life's battle?
Many wounded round thee moan;
Lavish on their wounds thy balsams,
And that balm shall heal thine own.

"For the heart grows rich in giving:
All its wealth is living grain;
Seeds which mildew in the garner,
Scattered, fill with gold the plain.
Is thy burden hard and heavy?
Do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden;
God will bear both it and thee.

"Is the heart a well left empty?
None but God its void can fill:
Nothing but a ceaseless fountain
Can its ceaseless longings still.
Is the heart a living power?
Self-entwined, its strength sinks low;
It can only live in loving,
And by serving love will grow."
— *Mrs. Charles.*

LESSON VII. — February 12.

ELIJAH'S VICTORY OVER THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.

1 Kings 18: 1, 2, 17–40.

PRINT vs. 25–39. READ 1 Kings 18. COMMIT vs. 38, 39.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Choose you this day whom ye will serve.*** — JOSH. 24: 15.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

This Lesson Is So Dramatic in its story that it will become most effective by reading it in character. The narrator reads the story that introduces and connects the speakers, — Elijah, Ahab, two or three speaking for the priests of Baal, and two or three for the people.

The lesson can be wisely presented in a series of scenes.

Elijah and Obadiah.
Elijah and Ahab.
The gathering on Carmel.
Elijah and the Baalites.
Elijah building his Altar.
Elijah at Prayer.
The Answer by fire.
Elijah running before Ahab's chariot.

For Children. — Using the plan of the Oxford student in *Tom Brown at Oxford*, each class may paste a map of Palestine on a thin block of soft wood. Then taking a white headed pin for Elijah, a black one for Ahab, a few common pins on which are placed small paper flags of red for the Baalites, and other pins with flags of white, move them from place to place according to the narrative. The white pin starts from Zarephath toward Israel, the Ahab pin from Samaria; they meet, they move to Carmel. The Baalite pins go in numbers from Samaria to Carmel, and after the sacrifice are swept off the map. The white flags for the people come from different parts of the country to Carmel. Elijah and Ahab return together to Samaria.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

These movements may be made on the map with colored pencils or inks.
Write out a list of the scenes.
Another list of the chief persons.

LEARN BY HEART.

Jas. 5: 17, 18; Matt. 6: 24; 1 Kings 18: 21.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Three to three and a half years after Elijah first warned Ahab. Between B.C. 920–900 (or 878–857).

Place. — The great meeting was on Mt. Carmel, near its summit. The situation so far from the capital would leave the meeting unmolested by the city hoodlums, and Jezebel's influence.

Rulers. — Ahab and Jezebel over Israel. Jehoshaphat king of Judah, in the midst of his reforms.

Phenicia, Tyre and Sidon. — "Meander of Ephesus also refers to a drought during the reign of Ethobalos [Ethbaal, father of Jezebel], king of Tyre, which lasted one year and was finally averted, according to Phenician tradition, by the intercession of the king." — *Professor Kent.*

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

How Elijah had been prepared for his work.
What light is thrown upon Elijah's action by Jas. 5: 17, 18?
How the Famine had prepared the people.
"Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"
Why the assembly was at Carmel instead of Samaria.
How did the transaction on Carmel lead to the right choice?
Compare Joshua's assembly of the people between Gerizim and Ebal, and their decision.
Between what things must we make a similar choice?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Life Choice of Whom We Will Serve.

I. THE HOUR STRUCK FOR THE PUNISHMENT TO END (v. 1).
II. THE MEETING OF ELIJAH AND AHAB (vs. 2–18).
III. THE ASSEMBLY ON CARMEL (vs. 19–21).
IV. THE TEST OF WHO IS THE TRUE GOD (vs. 22–25).
V. THE BAALITES COME TO THE TEST, AND FAIL (vs. 26–29).
VI. ELIJAH, ALONE, COMES TO THE TEST (vs. 30–38).
VII. THE RESULTS OF THE TRIAL.
THE LESSON IN MODERN LIFE.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Farrar in the *Expositor's Bible on Kings* is very suggestive.

All the books on Elijah, by Milligan, Taylor, McDuff, etc.

Trumbull's *Studies in Oriental Social Life*, pp. 258–261. The Dervishes, illustrating the priests of Baal.

Professor McFadyen, *The Prayers of the Bible*, pp. 98, 109, 114, etc.

On Mt. Carmel see Stanley's *Jewish Church*, and Prof. G. A. Smith's *Historical Geography*.

See also the several later *Bible Dictionaries*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Peter Bayne, in *The Days of Jezebel*, has a fine description of the trial on Carmel; so has George Lansing Taylor, in *Elijah the Reformer*. Sir Walter Scott's brief poem, "The Cloud Seen from Carmel." Longfellow's "Rain in Summer." Lowell's *Poems*, "The Present Crisis." The tract, *On Which Side of the Line;* Prescott's *Conquest of Peru*, I., 263–5, and Abbott's *Cyrus the Great* and his two feasts, have capital illustration.

THE LESSON IN ART.

*Elijah's Sacrifice.**
*Mount Carmel.**
* Wilde's Bible Pictures.

I. **The Hour Had Struck for the Punishment to End,** v. 1. St. James in his Epistle tells us that Elijah had prayed earnestly that "it might not rain," because the famine seemed to be the only way by which the people could be brought to repentance; and that now, at the end of three years and a half, he again prayed that it might rain.

It is probable, as Farrar suggests, that Elijah did not remain all the time at Zarephath, but that he wandered more or less among the people in the security and seclusion of the caves and thickets of Carmel, "the haunt once of lions and bears, and still of leopards and hyænas." He would thus see the bitterness of the famine.

> "All the earth was sick and famished,
> Hungry was the air around them,
> Hungry was the sky above them,
> And the hungry stars in heaven
> Like the eyes of wolves glared at them."
> (*Longfellow in "Hiawatha."*)

Recall the Irish famine about the middle of last century, and the song, "Give me three grains of corn, mother." "The 'sore famine' in Samaria had reached a point which, if it had not been alleviated, would have led to the utter ruin of the miserable kingdom."

And his heart was full of pity. He saw signs of repentance. The time was ripe for reform; and Elijah prayed to God for the blessed rain. God saw too. But it was wisest and most effective for all that the rain should come from God in answer to the prophet's prayer. For the fact that the relief came from the true God through his prophet would complete the work of the famine, and draw men to the giver of the blessing.

Compare the famines in India and China, and how the ship loads of supplies sent from Christian nations and distributed by Christian men and women, attracted the people to the Gospel.

The word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, perhaps the third year of his sojourn at Zarephath (*Cook*). More probably the announcement of the famine came just before the time for the rainy season to begin, so that the entire time of the drought would be about six months longer than the three years from the announcement to the return of the rains. Hence in Luke 4: 25, and Jas. 5: 17, the whole time without rain is reckoned as three and a half years.

Go, shew thyself unto Ahab, that he might know that God, and not Baal, was the source of deliverance.

II. **The Meeting of Elijah and Ahab,** vs. 2–18. The story of Elijah's meeting Obadiah, the pious prime minister of Ahab, whom the king had sent forth to find water, is described in vs. 2–16.

NOTE that Elijah sent for the king to come to him. The prophet was the greater and had more power. That Ahab came at all, shows that he recognized the power of the prophet, and of the true God; and that he had been humbled by the famine experience. We may realize how the consciousness of guilt weakened and cowed his soul, by Scott's picture of Lord Marmion, "who scarce could brook e'en from his king a haughty look," but trembled before the song of a stranger, "which full upon his conscience strook."

From a Photograph by Bonfils.

Convent on Mt. Carmel.

" For when within
Men shrink at sense of secret sin,
A feather daunts the brave :
A fool's wild speech confounds the wise,
And proudest princes veil their eyes
Before their meanest slave."

And yet it was a bold, brave act on the part of Elijah.

ILLUSTRATION. Luther, going to his trial before the Diet of Worms, and saying to his friends who opposed his going, " Were there as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on its roofs, I would on;" and saying of his enemy, Duke George of Leipsic, " If I had business in Leipsic, I would ride into Leipsic, though it rained Duke Georges for nine days running." — See Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, " The Hero as Priest."

THE CONVERSATION, vs. 17, 18. Ahab's first words to him were, **Art thou he that troubleth Israel ?** " He had no word to say of his own sin; he forgot the iniquity of the people of the land, in which he had been the leader; he took no note of the hand of Jehovah in the calamity, and spoke as if the whole matter had been a mere personal difference between him and Elijah. He cast the entire blame of it upon the prophet; much as if one suffering under a painful disease should blame the doctor for producing it, because, knowing the habits of the patient, he had predicted that it would come." — *Wm. M. Taylor.*

Elijah replied, **I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house.** The lighthouse and the fog-bell are not the cause of the wrecks on the rocks against which they warn. The alarm-bell does not set the house on fire. Sin was the cause of the calamity, and the only way to escape the calamity was to put away the sin.

Elijah then proposed that the question as to who was the true God should be put to a fair and satisfactory test.

III. **The Assembly on Carmel,** vs. 19–24. At Elijah's request King Ahab summoned the children of Israel from all over the country to Mt. Carmel, to witness the test.

MT. CARMEL. There was no place in the land so suitable for this purpose as the lofty but narrow ridge of Carmel 1,600 feet above the sea. It was a retired place, avoided by the great roads and yet visible from almost every part of the country.

THE ASSEMBLY. There were summoned from the capital into the presence of the people seated on the sides of the natural amphitheater, 450 **prophets of Baal** who presided over the worship of Baal, and were called " prophets " from their profession of divination, soothsaying, and fortune telling. With these were summoned Jezebel's 400 special **prophets of the groves**, i.e. of Asherah (as the word should be translated), the Phenician Venus, or goddess of love, — which Jezebel had introduced " so that nothing might be wanting to the complete observance of the worship to which she had been trained at home. The staff of priests, 850 for the two divinities, shews what an outlay was made for the perfection of the idolatrous rites." — *Cambridge Bible.* All these would be clothed in their priestly " white robes and peaked turbans."

Over against these stood (in the words of Geikie) " the solitary prophet of Jehovah, his rough sheepskin mantle over his shoulders, his simple linen tunic held together by a strap of hide, and his long hair hanging down his back or blown by the mountain breeze."

" On Carmel's crown now swarms a countless throng,
With one brave soul to stand for God 'gainst millions in the wrong."
— *Geo. L. Taylor.*

25. And E-lī'jah said unto the prophets of Bā'al, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your *gods*, but put no fire *under*.

THE APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE. Elijah came before the people and said, so that all could hear,

How long halt ye between two opinions?

How long do you go like one with stumbling, hesitating gait, one minute toward one side, and the next toward the other? Why do you hesitate? Come to a decision like a man. Why be "everything by starts, and nothing long"?

If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.

ILLUSTRATION from Prescott's *Conquest of Peru*, I., 263–5. Pizarro, in his earlier attempts to conquer Peru, came to a time when all his followers were about to desert him. They were gathered on the shore to embark for home. Drawing his sword, he traced a line with it from east to west upon the sand. Then turning towards the south, "Friends and comrades," he said, "on that side are toil, hunger, nakedness, the drenching storm, desertion, and death; on this side, ease and pleasure. But there lies Peru with all its riches and the glory of conquest; here Panama and its poverty. Choose each man as becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, I go to the south." So saying, he stepped across the line. One after another his comrades followed him. This was the crisis of Pizarro's fate. There are moments in the lives of men which, as they are seized or neglected, decide their future destiny.

IV. **The Test of Who Is the True God,** vs. 22–25.

The test of any person lies in what he can do.

Perrot & Chipiez.

Baal.

An epithet applicable to all gods.

If he claims to be a philosopher or a poet, his test is by his poems or philosophy.

If he is a man he must do a man's work.

If he claims to be a prophet inspired of God, he is tested by a prophet's deeds and words.

If he claims to be divine, he must do the works that only a divine being can do.

If God is our Father and not merely Creator, he can prove it to us only by the personal acts which a heavenly Father would do.

A religion is always tested by its fruits, its good works, the character it produces, the blessings it brings.

But sometimes in the training of men, especially in its early stages, it is necessary to have the fruits of the true religion and the Fatherly protection of God, which usually extends over long reaches of time, condensed into some great, marked, transcendent act of goodness and power. Such was the crossing of the Red Sea so often referred to in Israel's history.

So in this lesson is presented the tests of the true God.

What God was doing in Judah is contrasted with what Baal had done in Israel.

God had sent the famine in mercy; Baal could not feed the starving ones.

Now he will send the blessed rain; Baal had been unable to bring it.

And to make all this clear and vivid and persuasive, God will through his prophet answer by fire, which Baal and his 850 priests could not do.

The trial was as fair as possible. The Baalites had all the advantage. They were 850 to one. They had knowledge of all the trickery of their cult. Elijah was a simple countryman. They had their choice of the time. Baal was the sun-god, the god of fire. If Baal could bring the fire, he might bring the rain.

V. **The Baalites Come to the Test and Fail,** vs. 26–29. The priests of Baal, in the presence of thousands of his worshipers, could not honorably retire from the contest, however great their fears of defeat may have been.

26. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, it, and called on the name of Bā'al from morning even until noon, saying, O Bā'al, [a] hear us. But *there was* there was [1] no voice, nor any that [b] answered. And they [c] leaped upon about the altar which was made.

27. And it came to pass at noon, that E-lī'jah mocked them, and said, Cry [d] aloud: for he *is* is a god; either he is talking, musing, or he is pursuing, gone aside, or he is in a journey, or or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28. And they cried aloud, and [2] cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, lances, till [e] the blood gushed out upon them.

29. And it came to pass, it was so, when midday was past, [3] and that they prophesied until the time time of the [f] offering of the *evening* sacrifice, oblation; that *there was* there was [4] neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any [g] that regarded.

30. And E-lī'jah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; And and all the people came near unto him. [5] And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken that was thrown down.

[1] Psa. 115: 5; 1 Cor. 8: 4.
[2] Lev. 19: 28.
[3] 1 Cor. 11: 4, 5.
[4] V. 26.
[5] 1 Kings 19: 10.
a Or, *answer*.
b Or, *heard*.
c Or, *leaped up and down at the altar*.
d Heb., *with a great voice*.
e Heb., *poured out blood upon them*.
f Heb., *ascending*.
g Heb., *attention*.

They built an altar, placed the sacrificial bullock upon it, and put no fire under it. There were too many eyes upon them for any trickery, and not knowing what kind of a test was to be expected, they had no opportunity to prepare for any deceit. "It would almost seem as if tricks not unlike that practised year by year at the Greek Easter at Jerusalem were familiar to that age. Some of the fathers expressly state that the idolatrous priests of an earlier time were accustomed to set fire to the sacrifice from hollow places concealed beneath the altar, and it was an old tradition (found in Ephraem Syrus and Chrysostom) that the Baal prophets had concealed a man for that purpose beneath their altar, but that he had died from suffocation." — *Stanley*. They called on Baal till midday, and yet no answer of fire came. Elijah mocked them with the sharpest of all satire, the satire of truth, not of caricature, as most satire is. The *facts* were bitterly sarcastic, and Elijah merely held up the mirror before them, and pointed out to the people the real situation, that they might see the truth in the strongest light.

Satire is a dangerous weapon, but when it is *true*, and not a caricature, it is one of the most effective weapons against wrong.

They grew frenzied in their excitement, and cut themselves with their weapons. Herodian (*Hist.*, v. 3) describes the dance of Heliogabalus round the altar of the Emesene Sun-god, and Apuleius describes at length the fanatic leapings and gashings of the execrable *Galli*. Their feeling was that God was well pleased with such tortures and pains. The only sufferings with which God is pleased are those which men undergo for the sake of helping and saving their fellow men; such as Christ's sufferings on the cross, and Paul's sufferings (2 Corinthians 11) in order to give men the Gospel.

29. They prophesied, i. e. shouted and cried in wild ecstasies, like those in ancient times who thus in excited frenzies pretended to be filled with the power of their deities.

COMPARE THE CUMÆAN SIBYL. Virgil represents Deiphobe as going through the terrible struggle which, according to all legends, invariably accompanied this form of prophecy.

"Unearthly peals her deep toned cry.
Her breath comes thick, her wild heart glows,
Dilating as the madness grows.
Her hair stood up, convulsive rage possessed
Her trembling limbs, and heaved her laboring breast;
Her staring eyes with sparkling fury roll,
When all the god came rushing on her soul."
— *Eneid, Bk. VI.*

There was no answer, though they continued their exertions till **the time of the offering of the evening oblation** which in the days of Josephus was at three o'clock.

VI. **Elijah, Alone, Comes to the Test**, vs. 30–38. **And Elijah said . . . Come near unto me**, so that they could see and hear, and could know that there was no concealment or trickery.

31. And E-lī'jah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jā'cob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, [1] Israel shall be thy name:

32. And with the stones he built an altar [2] in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33. And he [3] put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* (it) on the wood: (and) *And he* said, Fill four barrels with water, and [4] pour (it) on the burnt *sacrifice* (offering), and on the wood.

34. And he said, Do (it) the second time: (and) they did (it) the second time. And he said, Do (it) the third time: (and) they did (it) the third time.

35. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled [5] the trench also with water.

[1] Gen. 32: 28.
[2] Col. 3: 17.
[3] Lev. 1: 6, 7, 8.
[4] Judg. 6: 20.
[5] Vs. 32, 38.

Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie of Syria, tells us that "the ecclesiastical official who claims miraculously to flood the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem with light, 'the Holy Fire,' on every Easter eve, would not let me see whether he had any material with him on entering the sepulcher, — nay, he would not let the Czarina or Sultana 'come near' to see how he does it." — *S. S. Times.*

From a Photograph by Bonfils.

Mode of Carrying Water Jars.

He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. "One of the 'altars thrown down' (1 Kings 19: 10) by command of Ahab or Jezebel." He was introducing no new religion, but restoring the religion of their fathers.

31. **Took twelve stones,** one for each tribe, recognizing the real unity of the nation. **Sons of Jacob . . . Israel,** signifying "the prince that prevails with God," **shall be thy name.** Again shall Israel prevail over all enemies, and thus renew their faith in the God of their fathers. As God answered Jacob's earnest prayer, so would he now answer Elijah's.

32. **With the stones he built an altar.** This was the way **he repaired the altar** (v. 30) selecting these stones from the ruins of the old altar. Around this altar was a trench, **as great as would contain two measures of seed.** The *measure* (Heb. "seah") = 3 gallons. The trench would thus hold 6 gallons. But perhaps Gesenius is right in regarding the phrase as meaning, "a trench as deep as the grain measure containing two seahs."

33. On this altar the wood and the sacrifice were laid. **Fill four barrels** (Am. R. V., "jars"). "Water-jars," such as the maidens used to carry on their heads. See cut of "jars" in the last lesson. Whence came the water in that great drought? From a spring which still exists under the cliff, and which is known to be perennial because it (and it alone, in this district) contains, as Tristram says, a species of snail, *Neritina michoni*, which can live only in unfailing water.

34. **Do it the third time.** Twelve jars full in all, "corresponding to the twelve stones of the altar, and for the same symbolic reason." — *Edersheim.*

36. And it came to pass at *the time of* the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, oblation, that E-li'jah the prophet came near, and said, O LORD, the [1] God of A'brăham, of I'saac, and of Israel, [2] let it be known this day that thou *art* art God in Israel, and *that* I am that I am thy servant, and *that* [3] I have done all these things at thy word.

37. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou, the LORD, art LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38. Then [4] the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* was in the trench.

39. And when all the people saw *it*, it, they fell on their faces: and they said, [5] The LORD, he *is* is the God; the LORD, he *is* is the God.

[1] Ex. 3: 6. [2] 1 Kings 8: 43. [3] Num. 16: 28. [4] Lev. 9: 24; 1 Chron. 21: 26. [5] V. 24.

The purpose of this was to prove to the people that there was no fraud, and no possibility of fraud. What he desires is to show the power and goodness of the living God, and thus attract the people to trust and worship him.

36. At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, about 3 o'clock.

37. Even to Elijah the blessing came only through prayer by which he was one with God in purpose, **that this people may know that thou art the LORD God.**

38. The fire of the LORD fell, not an accidental stroke of lightning, for the sky was clear of cloud. It was simply the direct act of God's will upon the laws of Nature. No mere natural act such as Baalites or anyone else could do, would prove that it was God himself who was summoning them to obedience. It would be a strange God, and Father, that could not use his own laws of Nature to produce a moral effect. The proof was the more decisive because the divine fire not only consumed the offering, but the water and the very stones of the altar.

COMPARE the fire of God's Holy Spirit coming upon the apostles at Pentecost.

VII. **The Results of the Trial,** vs. 39–46. FIRST. **The people . . . fell on their faces: and they said,**

The LORD, He is God; the LORD He is God.

This was a decisive, yet no mere sudden change; but one for which the famine, announced from God, had for three years been preparing them; just as the fire on the day of Pentecost came to disciples who had had three years of training under Jesus.

SECOND. The persons who had been perverting and destroying the nation, and were unrepentant, and would have returned to their evil work, were executed by the people at Elijah's command.

This was not a massacre, but a just and solemn execution of criminals. It was done on exactly the same principle as, in the most enlightened nations, murderers and traitors are executed, robbers and grafters are imprisoned, and defenders of their country shoot the armies of savages who come to attack, murder and ravage the land. No way has yet been found to escape this necessity in certain cases.

This is entirely different in principle from persecution of idolaters, or of those who differ from us, and from personal revenge. The business of religion, the main business of government, is to use moral suasion, to educate, enlighten, persuade, and show the sweetness and love, and blessedness of the right life.

THIRD. Elijah went up to the highest point of Carmel where a wide horizon of the sea was visible, and prayed for rain, prayed "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," which "availeth much." James (5: 16–18) uses this as an illustration of effectual prayer.

Elijah sent his servant to watch for the answer.

After seven times looking in vain, at last there appeared a little cloud in the west "like a man's hand," the beginning of an abundant rain.

"How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!
The sick man from his chamber looks
At the twisted brooks;
He can feel the cool
Breath of each little pool,
His fevered brain
Grows calm again
And he breathes a blessing on the rain."
—*Longfellow.*

But for Israel there came a new joy in the rain. It was the proof of forgiveness. It was the assurance of the divine favor. It "fell on the evil and the good"; on the evil to make them good, and on the good to make them better, with new love, new hope, new joy in their God and Redeemer.

THE LESSON FOR MODERN LIFE.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side."— *Lowell.*

Choosing, acts of the will, create the character and the destiny, of men and of nations.

Every one must of necessity choose Jehovah or Baal, Good or Evil, Right or Wrong, God or Mammon, the Principles that make the kingdom of heaven on earth, and in the Life beyond, or the Principles which carried out make hell.

This choice is usually made gradually, almost unconsciously as to its effect on character, in little things, in small decisions as to right and wrong courses; but sometimes made more suddenly in view of great temptations, or vivid views of truth.

Modern Baals that men worship, are wealth, pleasure, fashion, worldly honor and prosperity, material comforts, etc. These are worshiped whenever they are more important practically in men's lives, than are righteousness, honesty, truth, and any of the fruits of the Spirit.

The worship of these Baals will in time ruin any individual or nation. They will deteriorate in moral and, at last, in material things, if they continue in this way.

The danger of the individual and of the nation, lies not in the prosperity and the material wealth, but in the making Baals of them, making them supreme. The only way to escape this danger is to worship the true God, and to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. It is to use all wealth, material resources, business, commerce, inventions, as instruments for the improvement of the world, for bringing all men into the kingdom of God, for lifting up the degraded, for giving all an equal chance, for helping the sick, the ignorant, and training all into the best possible life for this world and the world to come. Only the Golden Rule of love can save an individual or a nation.

The greatest hope of our nation lies in the fact that the good, — such as social helpfulness, business cooperative experiments, gifts for religion and education, for hospitals, for the betterment of men in many directions, — is growing faster than the evils, and the evils are growing less.

See a remarkable article by Frederick Harrison in the *London Sociological Review* for October, 1909.

ILLUSTRATION. Have you noticed in the Lord's Prayer that the petition for Daily Bread, comes *after* the petitions for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven, and that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven?

The reason is not only that these first petitions are vastly more important than daily bread, but also because what may safely be included in the daily bread depends upon the fulness of the answer to the petitions for the coming of the kingdom of God.

Just as fast and far as those petitions are answered in the world, or any part of the world, the more comforts, wealth, advantages of every kind, are given in answer to the petition for daily bread.

The nearer nations come to the spiritual blessings described in the Celestial City of Revelation, the more they can safely have of its outward glories and blessings. Archbishop Whately rightly calls our attention to "the distinction between an *individual* and a *community*, when viewed as possessing a remarkable share of wealth. The two cases differ immensely, as far as the moral effects of wealth are concerned." The promise "of all these things" added unto you, refers to the general welfare, and to the individual as partaking thereof.

It is only in Christian lands, living in some good degree up toward the petition "Thy kingdom come," "Thy will be done," that we find the greatest blessings contained in the phrase "daily bread." Not long ago an article appeared in *The Outlook* on an "Interview with a billionaire." The billionaire was a man in humble circumstances, but he had a share by use in railroads, steamships, parks, museums, libraries, electric roads, electric lights, mines, printing presses, hospitals, and many other things, which cost many billions of money. "If it had rained drachmas or dollars in Greece for 40 days and 40 nights until the gold was as high as the housetops, Crœsus, if he had invested the whole amount could not have purchased the speed which an Irish emigrant can buy for $35."

It is this movement toward true socialism, that shows the value of the true worship of the true God, while the worship of modern Baals is a movement toward ruin.

LESSON VIII. — February 19.

ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN.—1 Kings 18: 41—19: 21.

PRINT 19: 1-16. COMMIT vs. 11-13.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.* — Isa. 40: 31.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

One can begin this lesson by calling attention to historical instances of great men who have had times of discouragement.

Napoleon, with all his greatness before him, was once so discouraged that he was tempted to kill himself.

Abraham Lincoln had times of deepest discouragement, and at one time, defeated by Douglass, thought that the end of his career had come.

So John the Baptist in prison; so Moses when the people failed him.

But every one of them went on in the way of duty, every one gained the victory over discouragement.

The emphasis is on the victory. That is the lesson we need to learn.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

Write down examples of discouraged people, and how they overcame.

Trace Elijah's journey from Jezreel to Horeb. What events took place on Horeb?

Compare Elijah's experience to that of Christian in the dungeon of Giant Despair.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 11-13; Psa. 42: 5, 8.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The day after the scene on Carmel, B. C. 909 (or 856,7), in the wilderness, and 40 days later on Horeb.

Place (1) Jezreel, one of the Royal residences 20 miles N. E. of Samaria.

(2) The wilderness beyond Beersheba, 40 miles S. W. of Jerusalem, 100 miles from Jezreel.

(3) Horeb, one of the mountains of Sinai.

Rulers. — Ahab and Jezebel in the northern kingdom. Jehoshaphat in Judah, prospering, while the famine desolated the northern kingdom.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

What in Elijah's work in our last lesson would tend to discourage him?
Trace his journey and give reasons for it.
What other causes for his discouragement?
What was the first means of his deliverance?
How did the experience on Mt. Horeb restore his faith and courage?
How did his mission aid him?
What do we learn from Elijah's experience as to the cure of our doubts and discouragements?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Despondency; Its Causes and Cure. Elijah in the Dungeon of Giant Despair, and How He Escaped.

I. ELIJAH IN THE DUNGEON OF GIANT DESPAIR (vs. 1-5).

II. HOW ELIJAH CAME TO BE A PRISONER THERE.
The Causes of his Despondency.

III. THE KEYS THAT OPENED THE DUNGEON (vs. 5-21).
SEVEN WAYS OF RELIEF for Elijah and for us.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

On Elijah's despondency Robertson has a sermon (No. 5, second series) which is finely seconded by Farrar's two chapters in *First Kings* (pp. 404-430), *Expositor's Bible*, which are clear and stimulating.

Milligan's *Life and Times of Elijah* gives a helpful survey of the whole episode. Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. 2.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

H. F. Lyte has a fine poem, on "Elijah's Interview with God." Keble's *Christian Year*, "Elijah on Horeb." Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian and Hopeful in the Castle of Giant Despair. Arnold's *Light of Asia*, "The Seven Fears Turned into Seven Joys."

THE LESSON IN ART.

Elijah in the Desert, by Stuerbondt; by Dierich Bonts.* *Elijah and the Angel*, by Doré; by Tintoretto, Venice.

1. And Ahab told Jĕz'e-bĕl all that E-lī'jah had done, and withal how he had [1] slain all the prophets with the sword.

2. Then Jĕz'e-bĕl sent a messenger unto E-lī'jah, saying, [2] So let the gods do *to me,* / to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow / to-morrow about this time.

3. And when he saw *that,* / that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Bē'er-shē'ba, which *belongeth* / belongeth to Jū'dah, and left his servant there.

4. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a [a] juniper tree: and he [3] requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* / am not better than my fathers.

[1] 1 Kings 18: 40.
[2] Ruth 1: 17; 1 Kings 20: 10; 2 Kings 6: 31.
[3] Num. 11: 15.
[a] Or, *broom.*

I. Elijah in the Dungeon of Giant Despair, vs. 1–5. In our last lesson we left Elijah running before Ahab's chariot from Carmel to Jezreel, one of the royal residences, while the blessed rain was refreshing the whole country, an emblem of what God would do spiritually for the nation. Elijah was too wise to enter the lair of the tigress. But **Ahab told Jezebel.** "We can imagine the bitter objurgations which she poured upon her cowering husband for having stood quietly by while *her* prophets and Baal's prophets were being massacred by this dark fanatic, aided by a rebellious people." — *Farrar.*

2. Then Jezebel, scornfully ignoring her husband, and undefeated, whatever may have happened to her prophets, in the intensity of her rage, bound herself by an oath "like that of the forty Jews who bound themselves that they would not eat or drink till they had slain Paul; and as when Richard III. declared that he would not dine till the head of Buckingham had fallen on the block," and **sent a messenger unto Elijah. If I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.** She felt that Elijah was in her power, and she would prolong his torture by this announcement.

Branch of Juniper, or Broom Tree.

3. **And when he saw that,** realized it: "The Hebrew is almost as terse as Cæsar's *Veni, vidi, vici,* — **'He saw . . . he arose,** he **went.'** "— *Wood.* He fled "like the Greek Orestes pursued by the furies." His servant went with him, probably a young man he was training to be a prophet; such as Mark was to Paul on his first missionary journey. **Came to Beersheba** in the kingdom of **Judah,** out of Jezebel's jurisdiction. The distance was about a hundred miles as the crow flies, but much farther by road.

DID THIS SHOW A WANT OF FAITH AND COURAGE IN ELIJAH? So long as a true man has a work to do, he does it, as Elijah did, against all the Apollyons and dragons and furies that wicked men or demons can mass against him. He counts not his life dear unto him. But when his work is done, it was, as Farrar says, "no part of his duty to throw away his life, and give a counter triumph to the Baal-worshipers whom he had so signally

humiliated." Elijah was a brave man if ever there was one, but he was not a braggadocio. He was brave enough to let the ignorant think he was a coward. His going was not a sign of cowardice, but of wisdom and common sense. Christ himself bade his disciples, "When ye are persecuted in one city flee ye to another"; kindle the divine fires elsewhere, and there shall be two flames instead of one. Paul, the bold and impetuous, always acted on this principle, fleeing from Damascus, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea, Ephesus, and Corinth. Elijah's flight was not like Jonah's, to escape a dangerous task. "Elijah flies only when he has done the mighty work of God, and only when the life is in deadly peril which he would fain save for future emergencies of service."

4. **He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness.** He would be alone, without even his servant, in this Gethsemane, as Christ when he went in his agony to pray alone.

Sat down under a juniper tree, probably the broom-plant, the *Retama retem* 10 to 12 feet high, "lighted up by a pink cloud of blossoms" (*Cheyne*). "When in bloom, it forms a striking picture in the desert landscape" (*Wright*). Professor Mitchell of Boston University writes that he sat under one of these trees and found it plenty large enough to shelter Elijah from the sun.

He requested for himself that he might die. He had hoped to accomplish the deliverance of the people, but he was terribly disappointed. Jezebel still had power. Heathenism would still flourish. All his efforts had been but trying to dam Niagara with bulrushes. "All thy billows have gone over me."

I am not better than my fathers, who had failed in preserving the nation in the worship of Jehovah.

5. **He lay down and slept,** utterly worn out, and exhausted.

II. **How Elijah Became a Prisoner in Giant Despair's Castle.** — While Elijah is asleep under the juniper tree, let us look at the CAUSES OF HIS DESPONDENCY.

Because we can understand the remedy best when we know the nature of the disease.

Because the experience is common in some degree to nearly all persons, and all need encouragement, and the Key of Promise that unlocks the dungeon's doors and gates.

"In Moses, as doubtless in Elijah, so far from being the clamor of whining selfishness, his anguish was part of the same mood which made him offer his life for the redemption of the people; which made St. Paul ready to wish himself anathema from Jesus Christ if thereby he could save his brethren after the flesh. . . . Whitefield rose into heroism when he cried, 'Perish George Whitefield, so God's work be done'; and the Duke of Wellington when — remonstrated with for joining in the last charge at Waterloo, with the shot whistling round his head — he said, 'Never mind; the victory is won, and now my life is of no consequence.' . . . A man like Dante or Milton, when he stands alone, hated by princes and priests and people, retorts scorn for scorn, and refuses to change his voice to hoarse or mute. Yet even Dante died of a broken heart, and in Milton's mighty autobiographical wail of Samson Agonistes, amid all its trumpet-blast of stern defiance, we read the sad notes: —

> 'Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
> Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;
> This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
> No long petition, speedy death,
> The close of all my miseries, and the balm.'"
>
> —*Farrar.*

The Causes of Elijah's despondency were

FIRST. PHYSICAL EXHAUSTION after the most tremendous conflict of his life. It was the reaction of the body upon the soul, the exhaustion of physical and nervous energy, after the excitement and intense nervous strain of his great work on Carmel. Depression and discouragement under such circumstances are a very common experience. "The greater the strain, the more terrible the recoil"; the higher the tide, the lower the ebb.

SECOND. FORCED INACTIVITY. He had no object to work for, to hope for. He was thrown out of business. He had nothing to occupy his time. "To such a spirit as his nothing is so fatal as to have nothing to do and nothing to hope for. 'What did the Maréchal die of?' asked a distinguished Frenchman of one of his comrades. 'He died of having nothing to do.' 'Ah!' was the reply; 'that is enough to kill the best General of us all.'" — *Farrar.*

> "Life without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
> And hope without an object cannot live."

5. And as he lay down and slept under a juniper tree: and, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

6. And he looked, and, behold, there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

8. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat [1] forty days and forty nights unto [2] Hō'reb the mount of God.

9. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, E-lī'jah?

[1] Ex. 34: 28; Matt. 4: 2. [2] Ex. 3: 1.

THIRD. LONELINESS. "I only am left." The whole Cause was on his shoulders without a counselor, a helper or friend, and the Cause was so great. "It is the Psalmist crying: 'I am become like a pelican in the wilderness.' It is St. Paul wailing so sadly, 'All they of Asia have turned from me. Only Luke is with me.' It is the pathos of desolation which breathes through the sad sentence of the Gospels, 'Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.'"

FOURTH. A SENSE OF FAILURE, utter and seemingly irretrievable failure. All his labors, his energies had been in vain. The Cause was lost. "It was the lot of Him who, from that which seemed the infinite collapse and immeasurable abandonment of His cross of shame, cried out: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'"

III. The Keys That Opened the Doors of Giant Despair's Dungeon. The Divine Cure for Despondency, vs. 5–21.

FIRST CURE. GOD GAVE HIS BELOVED SLEEP, and who knows what dreams and visions shone in the darkness. Rest for mind and body.

SECOND CURE. GOD SENT HIM A FRIEND. **5. Behold, then an angel touched him.** God's messenger, human or angelic. More probably the latter, one of the "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be 'heirs of salvation.'"

"Flitting, flitting, ever near thee,
Sitting, sitting by thy side,
Like yon shadow all unweary,
Angel beings guard and guide."

Elijah's loneliness was broken. He was not forgotten.

THIRD CURE. FOOD. **6. A cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water.** Simple food, but full of strength. Then more sleep, and more food, "and a six weeks' vacation."

8. Went in the strength of that meat forty days. Without obtaining anything further than what the wilderness might afford. "The Bedouin of the present time will start for a journey of several days with no other provision than two skin bags or bottles slung on his shoulder, — the one full of water, the other containing barley meal." — *Tristram.*

Unto Horeb the mount of God, one of the names for Sinai (Sī'nī, or Sī'nāi). This was about 200 miles south of Beersheba. Elijah could easily have reached it in 8 or 10 days, but he was not hasting to a special point, but wandering around the desert for 40 days, resting, thinking, crystallizing his thoughts, and thus becoming prepared for the message of God.

FOURTH CURE. THE WORD OF GOD. **9. The word of the Lord came to him, . . . What doest thou here?** What are you seeking in this place where God formerly spoke his words to man through Moses? Are you praying for light, and help, and guidance, in your trying circumstances? This not reproof but a loving question, that Elijah might open his heart to his Heavenly Father.

It is doubtless a right use of this question to emphasize for ourselves the different words.

What doest thou HERE? Is this the place where your work lies?
What DOEST thou here? Are you doing the work appointed you?
What doest THOU here? My Prophet, through whom I have done wonderful things.

10. And he said, [1] I have been very [2] jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and [3] slain thy prophets with the sword; and [4] I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

11. And he said, Go forth, and stand [5] upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and [6] a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:

12. And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

[1] Rom. 11: 3.
[2] Num. 25: 11.
[3] 1 Kings 18: 4.
[4] 1 Kings 18: 22; Rom. 11: 3.
[5] Ex. 24: 12.
[6] Ezek. 1: 4.

Elijah in reply uttered the thoughts of his heart, the facts that were troubling him, and which he could not understand. **I have been very jealous for,** "full of zeal, solicitous for the honor and interests of" (*Century Dictionary*), **the Lord God of hosts,** all the organized forces and powers of the universe. Yet it has been in vain. Thou, Lord God, with all thy power, hast not prevented the **throwing down thine altars,** nor **the slaying thy prophets with the sword. I, even I only, am left.** One of the best methods of curing our complaints is to utter them or write them out. This separates the feelings from the facts, and the feelings nearly always exaggerate the facts.

FIFTH CURE. A VISION OF THE TRUE, THE DIVINE, METHOD OF HUMAN PROGRESS, vs. 11–13. The answer to Elijah's despondent complaints was by a symbol, which would make the truth plainer and more impressive than could words alone.

"Who comes to God an inch, through doubtings dim,
In blazing light God will advance a mile to him."—*Rabia.*

11. Go forth, and stand upon the mount. That is, just outside of the cave. He went to the opening and looked out. **And, behold, the Lord passed by.** In the symbols of his power. **A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks.** "Travelers have borne witness to the overwhelming violence and majesty of the storms which rush and reverberate through the granite gorges of those everlasting hills. . . . The sound of them is beyond all comparison weird and terrific. We cannot wonder that this roar of the hurricane was regarded as the trump of the archangel and the voice of God at Sinai; or that the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind."—*Farrar.*

But the Lord was not in the wind. That is, however great this visible manifestation of his power, it was not the power by which God wrought his greatest works. It was a mere nothing compared with even the invisible forces of nature, much less when contrasted with his spiritual forces.

"On Horeb's rock the prophet stood,
The Lord before him passed:
A hurricane in angry mood
Swept by him strong and fast.
The forests fell before its force;
The rocks were shivered in its course:
God rode not in the blast!
'Twas but the whirlwind of His breath
Announcing danger, wreck and death."—*Lyte.*

After the wind an earthquake. Those who experienced the earthquake at San Francisco, and at Messina tell us that there is nothing so terrorizing as an earthquake; "Man never feels so abjectly helpless, he is never reduced to such absolute insignificance as when the solid earth beneath him, the very emblem of stability, trembles as with a palsy," opens beneath his feet and crushes cities like so many egg-shells.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake. There was not the hiding of his power.

"'Twas but the rolling of his car,
The trampling of his steeds afar."

12. After the earthquake a fire. The dread magnificence of one of those lurid thunderstorms of which the terrors are never so tremendous as in such mountain scenes, where travelers tell us that the burning air seems transfused into sheets of flame, "the light of his glittering spear."

13. And it was so. so. when E-lī'jah heard ft. it. that [1] he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. [2] And, behold, there came there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, E-lī'jah?

[1] Ex. 3: 6. [2] V. 9.

"From cliff to cliff, from peak to peak, pale ghostly lightning plays;
The rocks explode! On Alpine spires an hundred beacons blaze!
An hundred white St. Elmos dance on every gleaming height!
An hundred weird auroras arch the mount with wizard light!" —*Taylor.*

But the Lord was not in the fire.

"'Twas but the fierceness of his eye
That lightened through the troubled sky."

And after the fire a still small voice. This represented the hiding of God's power.

"At last a voice all still and small
Rose sweetly on the ear,
Yet rose so calm and clear that all
In heaven and earth might hear.

"It spoke of peace, it spoke of love,
It spoke as angels speak above;
And God himself was here.
For oh, it was a Father's voice
That bade his trembling world rejoice."

WHAT THIS MEANT FOR ELIJAH AND FOR US. The outward, visible manifestations of power, whether in the natural or spiritual world, while necessary in their time and place, are but the smaller results of the power that produced them.

For instance, in the natural world, the storms however great, express but the slightest effects of the air, which gives life to all living beings, men, beasts, trees. This world without air would be as dead as the moon.

The power that changes winter to spring.

How feeble the lightning compared with the silent invisible work of electricity lighting our cities and homes, driving our machinery, carrying our messages over the wires.

It used to be thought that the upheaval of the continents and the rearing of the great mountains was due to cataclysms and conflagrations and vast explosions of volcanic force. It has long been known that they are due only in part to these, but chiefly to the inconceivably slow modifications produced by water, and air and heat.

It is the same with the progress of mankind. The old histories, excepting the Bible, used to dwell chiefly on wars and revolutions and the actions of kings and chieftains. But modern historians, not ignoring these, tell us that underneath all these, often in spite of them, are the real powers that make for the progress and growth of the nation. Thus Green, in his *History of England*, says that during the Wars of the Roses, which chiefly affected the leaders, there was going on the steady progress of the people in literature, religion, and wealth.

All reforms are produced in the same way; denunciations, even wars, and prisons are for a time necessary, but the real power lies beneath the surface in a pervading feeling and change among the people. Judge Lindsey's experiments in reforming boys, teachers governing schools, and parents training their children, — all who are successful apply this same principle.

This is true of our own characters. They are formed mostly by silent, unobtrusive forces. The great and marked events have had less effect than the inward working of God's Spirit and the influences amid which we live.

The church grows in the same way. The outward changes of form, the visible signs of growth, have small influence compared with the deep currents of thought, the gradual change of spirit. The waves on the surface have small power compared with the great silent undercurrents.

So long as all real progress in religion, in reform, in the coming of the kingdom of God, lies always in a change of will, of character, so long the change must be made by motives, and moral influences, not by force. "The lion shall lie down with the lamb," but only when the lion's nature is so changed that it loves to eat grass like the ox, and does not want to eat the lamb.

This principle, illustrated by the scene on Horeb, the storm, earthquake and lightning on the one hand and the still small voice on the other, is one of the chief cures of despondency.

SIXTH CURE. NEW WORK FOR THE SAME END, vs. 13–16. **Went out**, from the cave to which the storm and wind had driven him. Again the voice says **What doest thou here, Elijah?** Have you learned the lesson? School is out, will you now go back to work in this new spirit?

14. [1] And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts: because for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15. And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Da-măs'cus: [2] and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hăz'a-el to be to be king over Syr'ĭ-a:

16. And and [3] Jē'hū the son of Nĭm'shī shalt thou anoint to be to be king over Israel: and [4] E-lī'sha the son of Shā'phat of A'bĕl-me-hō'lah shalt thou anoint to be to be prophet in thy room.

[1] V. 10. [2] 2 Kings 8: 12. [3] 2 Kings 9: 1–3. [4] Luke 4: 27, called *Eliseus*.

14. And he said, repeating what he had said before in v. 10, as if he would ask, — since the facts were unchanged, what could he do?

Three tasks were given him (1) **15.** He was to return, not yet to Israel, but around it to **the wilderness of Damascus.** Damascus was on the borders of the desert. Here he would be beyond the dominions of Ahab. He was not for the present to enter into the scene of danger, but to do his work from without. Gradually better times came; and we find him in the kingdom, and the schools of the prophets flourishing. **Anoint.** It was customary to set apart, by anointing, kings and prophets. It often means merely to set apart for some special service of God. **Hazael.** The confidential officer of Benhadad, the king of Syria at that time. He was set apart, as we see in v. 17, to be the instrument of punishing Israel for their sins. He was the storm and the fire that went before the voice of the Lord.

(2) **16. Jehu the son** (grandson) **of Nimshi.** He was the commanding general over the army of Israel, who, in the days of Jehoram, Ahab's son, slew him, his mother Jezebel, and all Ahab's descendants, restoring the worship of Jehovah. All this also may have been disclosed to Elijah.

(3) **And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah.** Abel-meholah (the modern *Ain Helweh*) was west of the Jordan near Tirzah, not far from Elijah's native Gilead. **To be prophet in thy room.** Not immediately, but to be in training for the same work. Thus Elijah was assured by Jehovah of the permanency of his work, which, though not immediately successful, was ultimately to triumph. "God's workmen die, but the work goes on."

SEVENTH CURE. ASSURANCE THAT HIS WORK WAS NOT A FAILURE. **18. Yet I have left me.** Spared from the terrible doom that will fall upon Israel. The R. V. gives the correct translation: "Yet *will* I leave me." Not only are the seven thousand faithful now; they will continue faithful, and therefore safe. **Seven thousand in Israel,** a round number. **Every mouth which hath not kissed** Baal. "Kissing images was a sign of idolatry then as it is now."

ILLUSTRATION. Caught once in the mist and rain upon the top of Mount Washington, we gathered around the fire in the Tiptop House, and were looking over photographs of the views, when a stranger called my attention to a picture of the railroad train ascending the steep sides of the mountain, and gave me these facts. The artist had tipped his camera to make the ascent seem steeper than it really was, because the steeper the appearance, the greater the sale. A young clergyman reproved him for the deception, saying that every picture was a lie. The artist replied by offering to give him the picture which best expressed his *feelings* while riding in the car up the mountain; and he chose the one which showed the steepest grade. The facts were one thing, the feelings another. The facts cure the feelings. Each crime is reported in all the papers, while ten thousand good deeds pass unnoticed because they are so common. It seems sometimes to us that goodness and piety are decreasing, that "all men are liars," or dishonest, because we apply wrong tests, or let the evils that are near make impressions upon us, which the facts will correct.

"A still small voice comes through the wild,
Like a father consoling his fretful child,
Which banisheth bitterness, wrath, and fear,
Saying, 'Man is distant, but God is near.'" — *Temple.*

It is for us to be cheered by God's method of cheering, and then to pass on the encouragement, and cheer others by the cheer whereby God has cheered us.

The coach of the Harvard football team in an address to the students, said, "Cheering is the most important factor in the success of the team."

LESSON IX. — February 26.

ELIJAH MEETS AHAB IN NABOTH'S VINEYARD.

1 Kings 21.

PRINT vs. 11-20. READ 1 Kings 20. COMMIT vs. 17-19.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.* — LUKE 12: 15.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Miss Wingate, in the *Westminster Teacher*, writes:

"Say, boys, did you ever stop to think
That we are the coming men?
That we've only a few short years to prepare
Ourselves for the work, and then
The fate of the world will rest in the hands
Of those who are boys to-day?
I tell you it makes a fellow feel that
He wants to be armed for the fray!
We cannot afford to hamper ourselves
With habits that work us harm;
We need to be true of head and heart,
With a steady, strong right arm;
We need to be *men* — real, honest men,
With a love of life and its joys,
But ever ready to stand for the right;
And in order to do that, boys,
We've got to begin right now, or ELSE" —?!

Covetousness, as presented in the story of Ahab, is so great and hideous that children cannot imagine that their selfishness could ever grow into such a monster. But Ahab began as a sweet innocent baby, with never a dream of his later character and deeds. The only way of Safety is *to Begin* RIGHT, NOW. Repeat the poem in concert, and then we will study the great evil to be escaped by choosing, now while young, the path to the place where we want to go.

LEARN BY HEART.

The Tenth Commandment; 1 Tim. 6: 10; Luke 12: 15, 34.

CHARACTER STUDY.

King Ahab.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Professor Beecher puts this story in the 20th year of Ahab, B.C. 906 (or 863, Assyrian) between his Syrian Campaign, 1 Kings 20, and the war described in 1 Kings 22. Four or five years after the last lesson.

Place. — Ahab's house in Samaria, and Naboth's vineyard in Jezreel, 20 miles to the north.

Kings. — Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Ahab, of Israel.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

Copy the poem.
Locate Samaria and Jezreel.
State the evils of covetousness.
What is the cure?

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Character study of Ahab.
Was Naboth right and wise in refusing the king's request?
What is covetousness?
Why is it so important as to be forbidden in the Ten Commandments?
What is the cure for covetousness?
Repeat Bible warnings against it.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: A Story Illustrating the Tenth Commandment.

I. ELIJAH'S SUCCESS, BY THE METHOD OF "THE STILL, SMALL VOICE."

II. AHAB COVETS NABOTH'S VINEYARD (vs. 1-4).

III. A SUCCESS, BY WRONG DOING, THAT WAS A DEADLY DEFEAT (vs. 5-16).

IV. ELIJAH CONFRONTS THE KING IN HIS ILL-GOTTEN PROPERTY (vs. 17-29).

THE CURE OF COVETOUSNESS.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The Commentaries on the Lesson. H. C. Trumbull's *The Ten Commandments. A Covenant of Love*, is a very choice little book.

The most intense and powerful book on the Ten Commandments is Farrar's *Voice from Sinai* (Whittaker). F. D. Maurice, *The Ten Commandments Considered as Instruments of National Reformation*, and his *Social Morality*. Joseph Cook's *Monday Lectures*, "Conscience."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, vol. 2, ch. 8. Longfellow's "Morituri Salutamus," the introductory story; and his "King Robert of Sicily." Hawthorne's *Wonder Book*, "The Gold Touch" (the story of Midas).

Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* tells the story of the emperor and the Potsdam miller, illustrating Ahab and Naboth by contrast.

I. **Elijah's Success. The Working of "the Still Small Voice" After the Earthquake and Storm.** — For four or five years after our last lesson Elijah seems to have retired from public life. He was practising the lesson he had learned on Horeb. He was at work, but in a different way. His stormy work was not in vain. That plowed the ground, and now was the time for sowing the seed.

1. The seven thousand hidden believers were permitted to come into the open. Persecution had ceased. Others came out and joined them. The prophets had no longer to be hidden in a cave by Obadiah. "During all these years which follow the flight and return of Elijah, he and his fellow-prophets are not only tolerated, but are influential at the court of Ahab. Jehovah is protecting them, through the wholesome fear inspired by the affair at Mount Carmel, and through the pressure of dangers from foreign enemies." — *Prof. W. J. Beecher, D.D.*

2. Elijah encouraged and was at the head of the organized communities or schools of the prophets which existed as far back as Samuel. In his last journey he visited the "sons of the prophets" at Bethel and Jericho, and is spoken of as their head master (2 Kings 2: 1–6). From these centers, and from the schools at Gilgal (2 Kings 4: 38), Ramah (1 Sam. 19: 18, 20) and Gibeah (1 Sam. 10: 5, 10, where "hill of God" should be "Gibeah of God" as R. V. margin) "they exerted a strong influence, and their appearance at any particular spot was often the signal for the outbreak of a contagious religious fervor."— *Standard Bible Dic.* "These settlements may be described as training schools for religious purposes." — *Hastings' Bible Dic.* Elijah was thus educating the people in the true religious life. He was working in accordance with the still small voice of God.

From a Photograph.

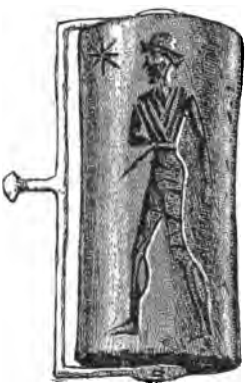
Ruins at Ramah, the Home of Samuel.

Elijah's success was in finding and training Elisha to be prophet in his stead, training under these newer influences and methods. The great prophet, so lonely hitherto, had found a friend. "If there was one thing Elijah needed to mellow him, it was that! When the voice sent him to Elisha, it sent him to a new school — a school in which he would meet a kindred mind and experience at the last those ties of human sympathy to which the days of his actual childhood had been strangers." — *George Matheson, D.D.*

II. **Ahab Covets Naboth's Vineyard,** vs. 1–4. **Naboth the Jezreelite,** a native of Jezreel, for his vineyard was an ancestral possession. We learn from v. 3 (**the LORD, Jehovah,** as Lord in capitals always means, **forbid it me**) "that Naboth was a worshiper of Jehovah and, in spite of the persecution of the prophets, did not shrink from making it known to the king by his language. Here was an example of one who had not bowed the knee nor given a kiss to Baal." — *Cambridge Bible.*

A vineyard, which was in Jezreel, one of the two royal residences, in one of the most beautiful regions of Palestine. "Ahab was a builder. He had built cities and palaces, and was specially attached to his palace at Jezreel, which he wished to make the most delightful of summer residences. It was unique in its splendor as the first palace inlaid with ivory. The nation had heard of Solomon's ivory throne, but never till this time of an

'ivory palace.' But a palace is nothing without pleasant gardens. The neighborhood of Jezreel, as is still shown by the ancient winepresses cut out of the rock in the neighborhood of its ruins, was enriched by vineyards, and one of these vineyards adjoining the palace belonged to a citizen named Naboth. It happened that no other ground would so well have served the purpose of Ahab to make a garden near his palace, and he made Naboth a fair offer for it. 'I will give you,' he said, 'a better vineyard for it, or I will pay you its full value in ingots of silver.'" — *Farrar.*



An Egyptian Signet.

Naboth refuses to sell it to him. He was perfectly within his rights in rejecting the offer. It was precious for the memories clustering around this ancestral inheritance. The permanent sale of the paternal inheritance was forbidden by law (Lev. 25: 23-28; Num. 36: 7), and it would seem like a denial of his allegiance to the true religion to sell it when the jubilee restoration was neglected in these idolatrous times.

4. **Ahab came into his house** at Samaria (v. 18), **heavy and displeased,** "sullen and angry" like an undisciplined boy. "He turns his face toward the back of his couch, rejecting all converse with others, and so remains after the banquet is served (v. 5), refusing to partake of it. Such an open manifestation of ill-temper is thoroughly characteristic of an Oriental king."— *Cook.*

"We see on an ivory couch, in an ivory house (1 Kings 22: 39), or in a chamber ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion (Jer. 22: 14), a man whose soul is so vexed and troubled that he can eat no bread, that he has a word for no one, but turns his face sullenly to the wall. Can this be the king of Israel? can this be Ahab, whose recent victories over the Syrians have rung through many lands? It is Ahab indeed. The great conqueror is a slave to himself. We hear his pitiful, almost childish, complaint, that he cannot have the vineyard he so much covets." — *Pulpit Com.*

"This accords with Homer's representation even of the Greek heroes. They cry like children when they are in trouble; they rend their garments, and roll themselves in the dust in a way that we would deem utterly extravagant." — *Tayler Lewis.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CONTRAST. FREDERICK THE GREAT AND THE MILLER. In the reign of Frederick, King of Prussia, there was a mill near Potsdam, which interfered with a view from the windows of Sans Souci. Annoyed by this inconvenience to his favorite residence, the king sent to inquire the price for which the mill would be sold by the owner. "For no price," was the reply of the sturdy Prussian; and, in a moment of anger, Frederick gave orders that the mill should be pulled down. "The king may do this," said the miller, quietly folding his arms, "but there are laws in Prussia"; and forthwith he commenced proceedings against the monarch, the result of which was that the court sentenced Frederick to rebuild the mill, and to pay besides a large sum of money as compensation for the injury he had done. The king was mortified, but had the magnanimity to say, addressing himself to his courtiers, "I am glad to find that just laws and upright judges exist in my kingdom." A few years ago the head of the honest miller's family, who had in due course of time succeeded to the hereditary possession of his little estate, finding himself, after a long struggle with losses occasioned by the war, which brought ruin into many a house besides his own, involved in pecuniary difficulties that had become insurmountable, wrote to the then King of Prussia, reminding him of the refusal experienced by Frederick the Great at the hands of his ancestors, and stating that if His Majesty now entertained a similar desire to obtain possession of the property, it would be very agreeable to him, in his present embarrassed circumstances, to sell the mill. The king immediately wrote, with his own hand, the following reply: "MY DEAR NEIGHBOR, I cannot allow you to sell the mill; it must remain in your possession as long as one member of your family exists, for it belongs to the history of Prussia. I lament, however, to hear that you are in circumstances of embarrassment, and therefore send you six thousand dollars to arrange your affairs, in the hope that this sum will be sufficient for the purpose. Consider me always your affectionate neighbor, FREDERICK WILLIAM." This obstinate mill still grinds in that locality. — From Carlyle's *Frederick the Great.* Told in Dr. Geo. M. Adams' *Biblical Encyclopedia*, vol. I.

III. **A Success by Injustice That Was a Deadly Defeat. Ahab Obtains the Coveted Vineyard,** vs. 5-16. **But Jezebel his wife came to him.** No doubt she was a handsome fascinating temptress. The most dangerous of all temptations are when Satan appears as an angel of light, gifted, attractive, brilliant. Learning what troubled the king,

she exclaims (v. 7) **dost thou now govern?** This sneer expresses in bitter irony her scornful wonder at one who "lets I dare not wait upon I would." Are you king? and can you not get possession of this petty vineyard?

> "Art thou afeared
> To be the same in thine own act and valor
> As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteemest the ornament of life
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'
> Like the poor cat in the adage?" — *Macbeth.*

I will give thee the vineyard. "I" is the emphatic word here. Compare the words of Shakespeare's parallel character Lady Macbeth: "Infirm of purpose! give *me* the dagger." "If we should fail," objects Macbeth. His wife exclaims:

> "We fail!
> But screw your courage up to the sticking-place,
> And we'll not fail."

"He is like wax in her hands, but none the less guilty on that account. His apparent virtue and moderation were simply cowardice." — *Tayler Lewis.*

8. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name. It is customary in the East now, as then, for the government to proclaim one thing publicly, and at the same time to give private instructions to the officials, of a very different nature, with the design of blinding the eyes of European governments. **And sealed them with his seal.** "Documents of every kind, from a royal decree to a private letter, are never signed with pen and ink in the East, but are simply sealed with a man's signet, which contains his name; a little ink is rubbed upon it, and it is pressed upon the moistened paper." — *Van Lennep.* This was necessary where so few could read or write, and where the writing is of such a character that it does not, as with us, reveal the individuality of each writer. For the same reason hotels in Shakespeare's time were designated by signboards, with pictures on them, as The Red Lion, The Elephant and Castle, The Boar's Head. Each one had his own seal, and it was death for any seal-cutter to make two seals alike. It would be equivalent to forgery.

9. Proclaim a fast. As if some great calamity were overhanging the city for their sins, like a black cloud portending a storm. (See Joel 1: 14; 2: 12; 1 Sam. 7: 6.) Something must be done immediately to avert the doom. **Set Naboth on high.** On the platform of the court, to be tried as a conspicuous criminal.

Rings and Seals.

10. Set two men, sons of Belial. Belial is not a proper noun, but simply means "worthlessness," "recklessness," hence the sons of Belial were those who inherited the very spirit of recklessness and depravity. Only such would bear such false witness as was required. "They were professional perjurers."

"Her letter to the elders of Jezreel speaks out with cynical disregard of decency, the whole ugly conspiracy. It is direct, horribly plain, and imperative. There is a perfect nest of sins hissing and coiled together in it, — hypocrisy calling religion in to attest a lie, subornation of evidence, contempt for the poor tools who are to perjure themselves, consciousness that such work will only be done by worthless men, cool lying, ferocity, and murder, — these are a pretty company to crowd into half a dozen lines." — *Maclaren.* **Blaspheme God.** "The true Oriental, however careless his life, is fanatically zealous for the honor of God's name. To blaspheme Allah in any place where Mohammedans congregate would probably result in the death of the blasphemer on the spot." — *Sunday-School Times.*

11. And the men of his city, even the elders, the principal men, the rulers, **and the nobles.** "Their fawning readiness to carry out her vile commands is the deadliest incidental proof of the corruption which she and her crew of alien idolaters had wrought in Israel." — *Farrar.*

11. And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants dwelt in his city, did as Jĕz'e-bĕl had sent unto them, and as it according was as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

12. [1] They proclaimed a fast, and set Nā'bŏth on high among the people.

13. And there came in the two men, children sons of Bē'lĭ-al, came in and sat before him: and the men of Bē'lĭ-al witnessed bare witness against him, even even against Nā'bŏth, in the presence of the people, saying, Nā'bŏth did blaspheme curse God and the king. [2] Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

14. Then they sent to Jĕz'e-bĕl, saying, Nā'bŏth is stoned, and is dead.

15. And it came to pass, when Jĕz'e-bĕl heard that Nā'bŏth was stoned, and was dead, that Jĕz'e-bĕl said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Nā'bŏth the Jĕz're-el-īte, which he refused to give thee for money: for Nā'bŏth is not alive, but dead.

[1] Isa. 58: 4. [2] 2 Kings 9: 26.

Did as Jezebel had sent unto them, proclaimed the fast, hired false witnesses, condemned him for cursing God and the king (13) **and stoned him with stones, that he died.** From 2 Kings 9: 26 we learn that "by the savage law of those days his innocent sons were involved in his overthrow, and his property, left without heirs, reverted by confiscation to the crown" (2 Sam. 16: 4).—*Farrar.* All this was done according to legal forms, but contrary to the whole spirit of the law.

15. **Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard.** And Ahab went. The Septuagint adds that HE *rent his clothes and put on sackcloth*, as though shocked at his crime, and anxious to prove his innocence to his own conscience and to the people. But the hypocrisy of the act was shown by his willingness to accept the fruits of the crime. "Perhaps Shakespeare's language best describes his feelings — 'full of scorpions,' reasoning against his conscience and his fears, 'Thou canst not say *I* did it.'" — *Andrew Wood*, in *Hebrew Monarchy*. "This mourning for the *means* but acceptance of the *fact* would not be in disaccord with Ahab's moral weakness."

There is an interesting reference to this journey in 2 Kings 9: 25, 26, which throws light upon it. In the words of Stanley: "He went in state, in his royal chariot. Behind him, probably in the same chariot, were two of the great officers of his court, — Bidkar, and one whose name afterwards bore a dreadful sound to the house of Ahab, — Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi." Jehu was a general of the army of Israel, who slew Ahab's successor, usurped the throne of Israel, and with his Captain Bidkar destroyed nearly every descendant of Ahab and Jezebel.

COVETOUSNESS. Covetousness (1) is not a mere desire for more; for that desire, in some form, is ever appealed to in the Bible, and is the root of all civilization and progress. (2) Covetousness is the over-strong desire for more, uncontrolled by reason, or conscience, or the word of God, — a desire that is willing to gain for itself (*a*) at the expense of others, (*b*) at the expense of higher and better things. It is not coveting to desire a house, but to desire it so as to deprive our neighbor of it, or to gain it by wrong-doing or neglect of duty. All true gains, all true increase, are such as benefit both parties and the community in general.

COVETOUSNESS is "a root of all kinds of evil." It is the desire, the motive that lies in the heart, "the prolific mother of all sins, the cockatrice's egg from which breaks forth the viper and the fiery flying serpent. Guilty longings are the avant-couriers of guilty deeds. The guilty curiosity lingering on the confines of temptation, pushes the wicket gate ajar; and when it has done so it springs into the menacing stature of a giant, and to the secret, timid, blushing apostate flings wide open the portals of abundant opportunity." — *Farrar.*

Is it not an awful thought that the deadly sin of Judas and of Ananias sprang from greed?

"Still as of old,
Man by himself is priced;
For thirty pieces Judas sold
Himself — not Christ!"

16. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Nā'bŏth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Nā'bŏth the Jĕz're-el-īte, to take possession of it.

17. [1] And the word of the LORD came to E-lī'jah the Tĭsh'bīte, saying,

18. Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, [2] which *is* dwelleth in Sa-mā'rĭ-a: behold, *he is* he is in the vineyard of Nā'bŏth, whither he is gone down *to possess it.* to take possession of it.

19. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? *And* and thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, [3] In the place where dogs licked the blood of Nā'bŏth shall dogs lĭck thy blood, even thine.

20. And Ahab said to E-lī'jah, [4] Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee:* thee: because [5] thou hast sold thyself to *work* do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD.

[1] Psa. 9: 12.
[2] 1 Kings 13: 32; 2 Chron. 22: 9.
[3] 1 Kings 22: 38.
[4] 1 Kings 18: 17.
[5] 2 Kings 17: 17.

Much of the sin and danger to our land springs from covetousness. The graft, the dishonesty, the liquor selling, the bribery, the fraud of every kind, the letting abominable tenements to the poor, selling honor and uprightness to get rich, grinding the faces of the poor, dwarfing the children by overwork, — all these and many more flow from the polluted fountain of covetous hearts.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "A ship may be overladen with silver, even unto sinking, and yet space enough be left to hold ten times more; so a covetous man, though he have enough to sink him, yet never hath he enough to satisfy him." — *Trapp.*

"Covetousness is the thirst, not of nature, but of a diseased mind. It is the thirst of a fever; the more a man drinks, the more he desires." — *Tillotson.*

"The desire for riches goes forward as fast as riches follow; so that it is not possible for riches ever to overtake the desire of them, no more than the hinder wheels of a coach can overtake those which are before." — *Tillotson.*

Covetousness is like drinking the salt waters of the sea, which only increase the thirst; or piling wood on the fire, making it burn the fiercer; or climbing higher, which only enlarges the horizon of the desires.

THE STORY OF MIDAS AND THE GOLD-TOUCH. This Greek story is best told, for children, by Hawthorne in his *Wonder Book*. Midas, the King of Phrygia, when the gods promised him any thing he would ask, prayed that everything he touched might be turned into gold. But no greater curse could have befallen him. He soon tired of turning rocks and trees to gold, and, becoming hungry, would eat, but the food turned to gold before it reached his mouth. He kissed his child, and she became a statue of gold. He could only pray that the gold-touch be removed.

IV. **Elijah Confronts the King in His Ill-Gotten Property,** vs. 17–29. **The word of the LORD came to Elijah.** In what form we do not know, any more than we know all the ways in which one spirit influences another. But that it was God's word is a fact.

18. **Arise, go down,** Jezreel was down hill from the whole region of Samaria and Carmel. **Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria,** i.e. who belonged there, his home was there. **He is in the vineyard of Naboth.** He was trying to enjoy his ill-gotten possession, soothing his conscience by the thought that Jezebel, not he, was to blame for the way it was obtained, and planning how he could use the spot for his palace gardens. But the avenging Nemesis was close at hand, and smote him like a flash of lightning from a clear sky.

19. **And thou shalt speak unto him.** "It is implied that Elijah found Ahab — strode into his presence — in the vineyard; not that he was there already when the royal chariot entered it." — *Pulpit Com.* "So had Moses stood before Pharaoh, and Samuel before Saul, and Nathan before David. So was Isaiah to stand hereafter before Ahaz, and Jeremiah before Jehoiachim, and John the Baptist before Herod. So, too, in later days, Savonarola could speak the bare, bold truth to Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Knox to Mary, Queen of Scots, and Bishop Ken to Charles II." — *Farrar.* Ahab walks around

his newly gotten vineyard. He admires trellis and cluster. He plans improvements. He tastes the nectar of the grapes. Like an apparition from the other world, like the ghost of Banquo at Macbeth's feast, suddenly Elijah stands before him. He had not seen Elijah for five years. He thought he was cowed and silenced by Jezebel, but now he confronts him with his death warrant, from the Lord God Almighty. "And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." Ahab went out to take possession of a garden of herbs, and there he stands face to face with righteousness, face to face with honor, face to face with judgment. Now take the vineyard! He cannot! An hour since the sun shone upon it, and now it is black as if it were part of the midnight which has gathered in judgment.

His sin had found him out. Then Elijah spoke to him his doom. The dogs should lick his blood in the very spot where they licked Naboth's blood. His sons should be slain, his wife, Jezebel, perish miserably, his whole dynasty come to an end. His doom was written on his soul. Like Poe's raven, "his soul from out that shadow shall be lifted, — Nevermore."

Farrar says, "As always happens to such colossal criminals, he has sold himself for naught — as Achan did for a buried robe and a useless ingot, and Judas for the thirty pieces of silver, which he could only dash down on the temple floor. Ahab turned away from the vineyard, which might well seem to him haunted by the ghosts of his murdered victims and its clusters full of blood."

So in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* we see one who "has sought happiness in the life of wealth, magnificence, and culture. Poets and painters have ministered to his tastes and caprices. But among the thousand friends of his prosperity he finds but one faithful in adversity, and he loathes the very sight of the gold, with the absence or presence of which the friendship of the world wanes or waxes."

Æschylus' tragedy of *Orestes*, where the ancient Greeks represented three terrible Furies as pursuing the criminal with pendent tongue, brandishing a torch in one hand and a scourge of snakes in the other.

"While music flows around
Perfumes and oils and wine and wanton hours,
Amid the roses fierce REPENTANCE rears
Her snaky crest." — *Thomson's Seasons.*

"O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven,
It hath the primal eldest curse upon it."
— *Shakespeare.*

TO MANY IN OUR TIME, the day of judgment is meeting them in the midst of their wrong doing. Never has there been such a number of prominent men compelled to go to prison for their sins and crimes that grew out of covetousness. And the work is going on. It is high time that young men took warning.

ILLUSTRATION. "Father Hawley," of Hartford, was telling the scholars in a mission school of a boy in that city who had stolen money from his employer's drawer, and been sent to prison for his crime. "When he opened that drawer so stealthily," said Father Hawley, "and looked down on the pile of bank-notes there, if only he could have seen written on top of them, in letters of fire, TEN YEARS IN STATE-PRISON! wouldn't he have slammed that drawer to again?"

THE CURE OF COVETOUSNESS.

1. A clear vision of the evil covetousness works in the covetous man's own character and destiny. How it degrades him, shuts him up in a narrowing prison like one described among the tortures of the inquisition, where the walls drew nearer together by one notch each day. The doors of opportunity are gradually shut against him, and his part in the blessing of the great world.

RECALL the story in 1909 NOTES, p. 349, where in a great school one boy refused to obey the rules, and was opposed to the whole spirit of the institution. The punishment which led to the boy's cure was the loss of opportunity.

2. The one essential cure is a change of heart that leads to a change of character. It is to give your heart to God, to consecrate your whole being to him, to love and obey him, to strive with the whole soul to build up his kingdom. Love is the cure of covetousness; love to God, and love to man.

3. Use every opportunity of giving and serving others. Don't complain of so many calls, but rejoice in the opportunity; search for opportunities as for hid treasure. God loves the whole-souled hilarious giver. Even the poorest can give. They can say, as Peter said to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, "such as I have give I thee." There

is much more to give than mere money; sympathy, work, time, aid in sickness, feeding the hungry, shelter, care, and a multitude of other things. Giving heartily is what may be called "a first instalment of heaven," an "earnest" of our inheritance, "a first payment which is a pledge that the whole will be paid, and that it will be of the same character and quality as the instalment." Heaven is joy, joy in the things that make heaven, and by joyous giving we are being trained in the deeds and qualities which make heaven what it is.

It may be hard at first to give money or service, but every one who wishes to conquer the deadly demon of covetousness, will begin to work in this way, and gradually grow into the spirit of love and service, and giving, till it is as natural to him to do these things as to breathe.

LESSON X. — March 5.

ELIJAH GOES UP BY A WHIRLWIND TO HEAVEN.

2 Kings 2: 1–18.

PRINT vs. 1–11. COMMIT vs. 11, 12. READ 2 Kings 1 and 2.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*** — GEN. 5: 24.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Elijah was a mighty Hero; and as we look at his life in the light of his glorious end, we can make him as fascinating an example of heroism, as any of the heroes of old.

Ask the boys, What is a hero?

What must one do or be to become a hero?

Can boys be heroic? Is it worth while?

Who is the most heroic character in all history?

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

Trace on the map the journey of Elijah and Elisha from Gilgal to the Jordan, noting the names of the several places where they stopped.

Put in any pictures you can find.

What do you find most to admire in Elijah?

What most to admire in Elisha?

What would you ask, if any person who had the power to give, should bid you to "Ask what I shall give thee?"

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Characteristics of Elijah.
Why Elijah asked Elisha to remain behind.
Why Elisha insisted on going with him.
Elijah's Epitaph, v. 12.
The double portion.
What legacy could Elijah leave to Elisha?
Compare Moses' death with Elijah's.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 9–11; Matt. 25: 21.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Probably about B.C. 900, six years after the affair of Naboth's vineyard, our last lesson (Assyrian 857) the 83d year of the divided kingdom.

Place of Elijah's translation, across the Jordan opposite Jericho.

Rulers. — Early in the reign of Joram, Ahab's son in Israel.

The latter part of the reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Fitting Close of a Noble Life.

I. THE SERENE RADIANCE OF THE SUNSET OF LIFE.
The quality of the last years of Elijah's life.

II. THE LONG WALK OF THE TWO FRIENDS (vs. 1–6).
A blessed friendship. Loyalty.

III. ELIJAH'S LEGACY TO ELISHA (vs. 7–10).

IV. THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH (vs. 11, 12).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The works referred to in the other lessons on Elijah.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

A fine description of the translation of Elijah in Taylor's *Elijah the Reformer*. Mendelssohn's *Oratorio of Elijah*. Lyman Abbott's *The Other Room*. *Pilgrim's Progress*, close of Christian's life. Plato's *Phædo*. "Does Death End All?" in Joseph Cook's *Monday Lectures*, *Biology*. N. P. Willis's *Poems*, "The Death of a Missionary." Tennyson's "The Passing of Arthur." Pope's poem, "The Dying Christian to His Soul." Bryant's "Thanatopsis." Dante's *Inferno* xx. 35–41 on the Ascent of Elijah. O. W. Holmes's *Poems*, p. 208, verses in memory of Lincoln, illustrate Elisha's words as Elijah ascended.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Elijah taken up into heaven, by Doré,* by De Loutherburg.*

1. And it came to pass, when the LORD would [1] take up E-lī'jah into heaven by a whirlwind into heaven, that E-lī'jah went with [2] E-lī'sha from Gĭl'găl.

[1] Gen. 5: 24. [2] 1 Kings 19: 21.

I. **The Serene Radiance of the Sunset of Life.** — Elijah's public life extended over not more than twenty years. The first fourteen were strenuous and heroic, with crises like thunderstorms. The Methodist minister, who was complained of for shouting so loud in his pulpit, replied, "I am not singing lullabies; I am blasting rocks." Elijah was blasting rocks.

But for the last six years since the vision of God, Elijah had been working more on the plan of "the still small voice." Once only did his fierce "woe unto you" blaze forth, when King Ahaziah, Ahab's son, sought aid from Baal instead of the God of Israel. He had been training his successor Elisha who was full of Elijah's spirit of religion, but manifested it in gentler ways. Moreover Elijah was the head of the several schools of the prophets, where he could train and confirm the members in their work of living and teaching the true religion, thus quietly undermining idolatry.

ILLUSTRATION. Elijah in his last days may be compared to the famous grape-vine at Hampton Court, England, which is probably the largest in the world. As the keeper was telling how many thousand clusters it bore I said to him that the grapes seemed very small for Black Hamburgs. "Yes," he said; "an old vine cannot bear as large grapes and clusters as a younger one; but the grapes are sweeter and of finer flavor. They are kept for the queen's use." It is true, and it is a comfort, that with the lesser quantities of fruit old age can bear for the Lord, the quality of the fruit may be better, and the flavor more heavenly.

> "The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
> Lets in new light through chinks that time has made:
> Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
> As they draw near to their eternal home.
> Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
> That stand upon the threshold of the new."
>
> — *E. Waller.*

II. **The Long Walk of the Two Friends,** vs. 1–6. 1. **When the LORD would take up Elijah.** "There is a great doctrine of Providence here. Not when Elijah would go, but when the Lord would take him. God knows when our work is done." — *Joseph Parker.* Rather God knows when it is time to transfer us **into heaven,** another field of work, a larger opportunity, from "ten pounds to ten cities." "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." **By a whirlwind,** see on v. 11.

Elijah went with Elisha, as Paul took Mark with him on his first missionary journey. Elisha was Elijah's attendant and companion, student and friend. Of these years it is recorded only that the young man "ministered" to Elijah (1 Kings 19: 21), "and poured water on his hands" (2 Kings 3: 11). **From Gilgal.** Not the Gilgal near Jericho, which is far below Bethel, but a Gilgal in the hill country of Ephraim, about eight miles nearly north of Bethel. The modern name is Jiljilia. Here, probably (2 Kings 4: 38), was a school of the prophets, among whom Elijah was dwelling.

2. And E-lī'jah said unto E-lī'sha, [1] Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me as far as to Bĕth'-el. And E-lī'sha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and [2] as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bĕth'-el.

3. And [3] the sons of the prophets that were at Bĕth'-el came forth to E-lī'sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

4. And E-lī'jah said unto him, E-lī'sha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jĕr'ī-chō. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jĕr'ī-chō.

[1] Ruth 1: 15, 16.
[2] Vs. 4, 6; 1 Sam. 1: 26; 2 Kings 4: 30.
[3] Vs. 5, 7, 15; 1 Kings 20: 35; 2 Kings 4: 1, 38.

2. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee. Elijah, Elisha, and even the sons of the prophets, evidently knew that Elijah's departure was at hand.

For the LORD hath sent me to (R.V., "as far as") **Bethel.** Another school of the prophets was there. Elijah's last journey was clearly laid out for him. Its object was twofold: a natural desire on the part of the great leader to revisit the scenes so dear to him, and his purpose to fix upon his disciples' minds the principles and precepts he held most important. Last words are best remembered, and the sight of the sturdy old man, still able to make on foot that journey of more than 30 miles (26 as the crow flies), his kindling glances, his ringing voice, must have remained with them a precious memory, nerving them to greater boldness in the cause of Jehovah.

WHY DID ELIJAH URGE ELISHA TO REMAIN BEHIND?

1. It may be that there was work for Elisha to do there.

2. It may be that remaining behind would be making him the head of the school in place of Elijah.

3. It may be that the old prophet wished to test the metal of his successor.

4. It may be that on this solemn journey Elijah preferred to be alone with his God. It is a solemn thing for any man to go into the unknown, untried world. There are those who in health think carelessly of the future, but they make me think of what the fishermen said, when in our first parish by the sea, my wife and I went out of the little harbor, in our little wherry, into the open sea after a great storm, in order that we might enjoy the tossing of the waves. The old experienced fishermen were anxious, and said, "They don't know enough to be afraid."

WHY DID ELISHA INSIST ON GOING? It was loyalty to the man he honored and loved and served. It was like Ruth's clinging to her mother-in-law,—a heartfelt devotion, a feeling of duty, that the Master needed his services, a loyalty to the Cause they both loved. Elisha also needed the friendship and last advice of the Master as a preparation for the great work he was to enter upon. Nothing but death could separate them.

So they went down to Bethel, eight miles nearly south of Gilgal. Bethel, twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem, was one of the two centers of Jeroboam's calf-worship, and perhaps it was as a protest against Bethel idolatry that one of the schools of the prophets was planted there.

3. Said unto him, Knowest thou. We may imagine them taking Elisha aside and speaking in awed whispers. How Elijah's coming departure was known to them we are not told. **Take away thy master from thy head to day.** "The teacher sat on an elevated seat, so that his feet were level with the heads of his pupils. (Compare Acts 22: 3.)"—*Cook.* **Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.** "The matter was too grave to be made the subject of conversation." And Elisha's sorrow was too deep.

4. The LORD hath sent me to Jericho, fourteen miles to the southeast as the crow flies but much longer to walk.

Here also was a settlement of the sons of the prophets. The same scene as at Bethel was repeated here.

6. The LORD hath sent me to Jordan, five or six miles further on. Here again Elisha stood the test.

LOYALTY. This action of Elisha, and that of Ruth, are among the most striking examples of loyalty in all history and they illustrate and enforce for us moderns the privilege

5. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jĕr'ĭ-chō came near to E-lī'sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6. And E-lī'jah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; here: for the LORD hath sent me to Jor'dan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view over against them afar off: and they two stood by Jor'dan.

8. And E-lī'jah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and [1] they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

[1] V. 14; Ex. 14: 21; Josh. 3: 16.

and blessing of loyalty to Jesus Christ and his cause. Loyalty is defined by Professor Royce in his latest book as "the willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause." "A man is loyal when, first, he has some Cause to which he is loyal; when, secondly, he willingly and thoroughly devotes himself to this Cause; and when, thirdly, he expresses his devotion in some sustained and practical way by acting steadily in the service of his Cause." For one to be without a great Cause to work for and be loyal to, is to be like "the man without a country" in Edward Everett Hale's story. But note, "If any lesson of philanthropy is well known, it is this, that whoever tries simply to help mankind as a whole, loses his labor so long as *he does not 'first undertake to help those nearest to him.'*"

Loyalty to such a Cause is the only way to true happiness and to a life worth living. This loyalty is intensified by its being embodied in a personal leader who is the embodiment of the Cause. Every thing done with this spirit, even the giving a cup of cold water in His name, is a part of loyalty to the Great Cause, and the Great Leader. Elisha's loyalty to Elijah was a part of his loyalty to the true religion and to the true God.

Such loyalty as Elisha's should be given by every one of us to Jesus Christ and to the making of this world into the kingdom of heaven.

We express this loyalty by trying in everything to do as Jesus would have us do.

We are to do business in such a way that if all did as we do, the world would be drawing near to the ideal.

We are to live at home so that if all homes were like ours, the world would be marching to "the drum beat of perfection."

We are to seek, to give, to work for the making of this world better, as far as our influence or money can extend, but first of all in the place where we are living.

These are only specimens of the ways in which we can express our loyalty to the most glorious Cause, and the most worthy and powerful Leader, the world has known or the thought of man can conceive.

III. **Elijah's Legacy to Elisha,** vs. 7–10. **And fifty . . . sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off.** The abrupt heights behind the town commanded an extensive view of the river, the nearest bend of which was five miles away. With a delicate sense of propriety the young men kept at a distance, but it was fitting they should be witnesses of the scene, to testify afterwards throughout the land to Elijah's favor with God and to the reality of immortality. For similar reasons the eleven witnessed the ascension of our Lord. **Stood to view.** R.V., "stood over against them afar off," i.e., looking toward them. **And they two stood by Jordan.** We can imagine with what eager longing Elijah looked across, toward the hills of his native Gilead.

8. **And Elijah took his mantle.** Of sheepskin, the outward sign of the prophet's office. **Smote the waters.** "As Moses 'smote' the river Nile (Ex. 7: 20), Aaron the dust (Ex. 8: 17), and Moses the rock (Num. 20: 11) — strongly, as one smites an enemy." — *Cook.* **They were divided.** As the Red Sea by Moses (Ex. 14: 21), and the Jordan, near or at this very spot, by Joshua (Josh. 3: 16) five and a half centuries before.

9. **When they were gone over.** Cheyne thinks that they went over to Mount Nebo

9. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that E-li'jah said unto E-li'sha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And E-li'sha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10. And he said, [a] Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

a Heb., *Thou hast done hard in asking.*

from which Moses saw the vision of the Promised Land, and where "he was not for God took him."

ELIJAH SAID. **Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee.** So God asked Solomon at the beginning of his reign. This was Elijah's last opportunity to do anything for his friend and successor, and he wanted to make an expression to him of his fatherly love.

"That blessed and most loving offer is made to every human soul. To the meanest of us all God flings open the treasuries of heaven. We fail to attain the best gifts, because so few of us earnestly desire them, and so many disbelieve the offer that is made of them. Yet there is no living soul to which God has not given the choice of good and evil." — *Farrar.*

ELISHA'S ANSWER. **Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.** The "double portion" was the portion of the *eldest son* according to Jewish law (Deut. 21: 17) — he received a double share of the inheritance. Elisha did not ask to become an Elijah, but to succeed him. He wanted the same spirit of God which had made Elijah so powerful, so useful. "What he wanted was the virtues of his friend. He was seized with an irresistible desire to possess those glorious characteristics of devotion to duty, courage in danger, loyalty to God. This is the longing of all noble souls, to catch and retain something of the spirit of heroes and saints." — *Goss* in *S. S. Times.* It was not a request of pride, or it would not have been granted, but a request for service; not ambitiously seeking Elijah's position, but humbly desiring to be his successor and do his work of guiding Israel back to God.

CHOOSING IS A TEST OF CHARACTER. It is not what we get, but what we choose, not money or poverty, but the love of money; not success in gaining pleasure, but what we seek first, that tests us as to what we really are. What we have and what we do often depend on many things outside of ourselves. What we choose is the work of our hearts and wills.

10. **Thou hast asked a hard thing.** "Good things are hard," was Plato's favorite motto. "The Christian is a man who attempts impossibilities." Hard things are made to be asked. This was a hard thing because (1) spiritual gifts are hardest to impart; (2) they are the most valuable of gifts; (3) they are not to be won or retained without heroism and fidelity; (4) God alone can give the best gifts. Compare Christ's answer to the mother of James and John when she asked preëminence for her sons (Matt. 20: 20–23).

Still there are gifts which a good man can give to those willing to receive. Every one has the gift of influence, imparting to others what he himself is. Some one writes: "The bequest of his spirit is the very gift which no teacher or prophet can ensure to his disciples. He can give them his thoughts, his methods, his distinguishing formulas, but his spirit is precisely what he cannot transmit." And yet that is the best gift any one can give to another. "Admiration for one higher than himself," says Carlyle, "is to this hour and all hours the vivifying influence in man's life." And Emerson's words are forever true: "What you are speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say."

"And just as in the sunlight, the shadow is cast without any effort, and is silent and often unnoticed of the man by whom it is cast, so in the nature of the case is our unconscious influence.

"And as a shadow always follows a man, so his unconscious influence is always operating and always abides. The Christian is never off duty." — *J. G. Holden.*

But it is something more than this that Elisha asked.

If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee.

1. If God gives you permission to see my departure, this will be your token.

2. If God opens your spiritual eyes to see and to understand, and only thus, can the

11. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared*[1] a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and which parted them both asunder; and E-li'jah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

[1] 2 Kings 6: 17.

gift come to you. It shows that God has given you the spirit by which you can be my successor.

So the gift of the Holy Spirit with power came to the waiting disciples with hearts open to receive it, while the crowds without merely heard a sound. "The most influential thing in the world is what men *see* in other people's lives." — *Prof. Whitney.*

"As the gem is dull and black in the darkness, but glows and burns and palpitates, restless with living splendor, when it drinks the sunbeam, so our poor souls, dull as they are and base with sin, may be transfigured into glory and loveliness, if, emptied of their lusts and selfishness, they lay themselves wholly bare to receive the effluence of God." — *Farrar.*

THE ANSWER. The parallel between the two lives is very striking, but Elijah was the pioneer, and the man who breaks a path is greater than the man who follows along the same way. Yet Elisha, more gentle than Elijah, was equally with Elijah the man for the times, the prophet suited to the needs of the nation. Elijah aroused, Elisha instructed; Elijah was the lightning that showed the precipice, Elisha was the bridge over the chasm. Elisha's characteristics were in many ways a contrast to Elijah. While "their lives were set to the same music," and were harmonious in purpose, they took different and contrasting parts in the harmony. He was the still small voice compared with the hurricane and the fire. The same spirit and purpose was in both.

IV. **The Translation of Elijah to Heaven,** vs. 11, 12. **There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire.** The R.V. margin has "chariots." It was a glorious body guard; but Elijah did not go up in a chariot, he **went up by a whirlwind into heaven.** The marvelous effects of electric light through prisms and fountains, might give us some idea of the scene. It was in this ascent, as in the ascension of Christ, that his physical body was changed into a glorious spiritual body (1 Cor. 15: 51, 52).

"Compare with this description the notice of the sight which Elisha's servant (2 Kings 6: 17) was permitted to behold when at Dothan he was terrified by the king of Syria's hosts, and 'the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.'" This was in answer to Elisha's prayer. It was an assurance that Elisha should receive the boon he asked of Elijah. Henceforth he was sure that that power was constantly near God's servants, and could say with firm assurance, "They that be with us are more than they which be with them." He learned the source of his master's spirit.

COMPARE the beautiful description of the death of Christian and Hopeful in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.* "Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate, and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them — the harps to praise withal, and the crown in token of honor. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells of the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, '*Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*' I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, '*Blessing and honor and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*' Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.' And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

12. **And Elisha saw it.** The ascension of Elijah, which was the sign given him by which he might know that he was to succeed to his master's office. **And he cried, My father, my father.** Elijah had been a father to him, in his care and training, in love, and in legacy. "It was the cry of orphanhood." "These words, too, may fairly be construed as suggesting an aspect of Elijah's character which is generally overlooked. Those who are most terrible in their denunciations of sin are often the fullest of tenderness and love."

The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. R. V., "chariots." "Though the noun in the Hebrew is in the singular, it has a plural sense here, and signifies *the*

chariotry, the mounted force of the nation, to which Elijah's presence is here compared." — *Cambridge Bible*. Elijah was a greater defense of his country than an entire army, for he helped place his country where God could defend and bless it; he inspired the people and thus doubled their strength; he had God's power behind him; he was alone mightier than four hundred prophets of Baal. "And what a wall of protection was this man about the believers in the land! He was their champion and standard-bearer. More terrible was he to Ahab and to Jezebel, in his invisible armor, than a whole host of Syrians and Philistines. He was the phalanx and bulwark of Israel." — *Krummacher*.

GOOD MEN are still the true army of salvation and defense for any nation. It is their example, their teaching, their influence, their wisdom, their religion that preserves the nation from destruction. Not in armies, but in righteousness; not in navies, but in the prevalence of true religion, is found the safeguard of a people.

ILLUSTRATION. When Jabez Bunting, one of the greatest of Wesley's disciples, died, a minister of the Methodist denomination, in preaching his funeral sermon, closed a glowing peroration by saying, "When Bunting died, the sun of Methodism set." A plain man in the audience immediately shouted, "Glory be to God! that is a lie!" — *William M. Taylor*.

"Oh, may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.

"O blest Communion, fellowship divine:
We feebly struggle; they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine."

ELIJAH'S FUTURE LIFE. "How blessed," said one of old, "that Cromwell is dead." "You poor fool," was the reply, "he is not dead but only sleeping. He may wake up any time."

Elijah was not dead;—

1. He lived in the record of his life.
2. He lived in the effects of his life.
3. He lived in Elisha's work.
4. He with Moses, returning to speak with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, gives a new proof that dying is only transferring our existence to another field of service, where all we have gained in this life will find ample scope. We are not to be forever harping and singing, except as our lives are songs, and our hearts make music. But there as here we shall "all be ministering spirits sent forth to do service for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Blessed are they who have so lived and served on earth that their earthly lives have been a training school for eternal service and growth in the life beyond.

(Verses 13–18 are best considered in the next lesson.)

LESSON XI. — March 12.

ELISHA THE PROPHET RESTORES A CHILD TO LIFE. — 2 Kings 4: 8–37.

PRINT vs. 25–37. COMMIT vs. 32–35. READ Luke 7: 11–17 and 2 Kings 2: 13–4: 44.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* —ROM. 6: 23.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

This lesson should take a much wider range than the one work of Elisha selected for the lesson. There are a series of bright short stories that precede the lesson, each one with an excellent moral, each one attractive to children, and useful to the older ones, each one more or less referred to in literature. They give us glimpses of the social life of the times which make the history more real to us.

LEARN BY HEART.

John 11: 23–26.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The character and mission of Elisha, as compared with Elijah.

Assign to each scholar one of the Elisha stories.

THE LESSON STORY BOOK.

Name all the persons belonging to this lesson.

Write the names of the places referred to and mark them on the map.

Write down the lesson which each of these stories teaches you.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Elisha began his career as a prophet about B.C. 900. But no exact date can be given to the separate stories, as it is not certain that they are arranged chronologically.

Elisha's Career as a Prophet covered nearly 50 years; during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash, kings of Israel, from B.C. 900 to 850 (Beecher) or (Assyrian) 857–807.

Kings of Judah. — Jehoram, Ahaziah, Queen Athaliah, and Joash.

Places. — The Jordan, Jericho, Bethel. Some part of Mt. Carmel, where Elisha sometimes retired.

His home seems to have been in Samaria. His guest chamber on his travels was at Shunem, in the valley of Esdraelon a part of Galilee, 7 miles south of Nazareth, 3 miles north of Jezreel.

Place in the History. — A picture of the life of the people during unsettled political times.

CHARACTER STUDY.

Elisha as contrasted with Elijah.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Some Characteristic Stories of Elisha, with Present Day Applications.

I. THE STORY OF THE PROPHET'S MANTLE (2 Kings 2: 13, 14).

II. THE STORY OF THE PURIFIED FOUNTAIN (2 Kings 2: 19–22).

III. THE STORY OF THE HOODLUM GANG (2 Kings 2: 23, 24).

IV. THE STORY OF THE BORROWED JARS (2 Kings 4: 1–7).

V. THE STORY OF THE WOMAN WHO ENTERTAINED A PROPHET (2 Kings 4: 8–37).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The Bible Commentary (Cook's) seems on the whole to be the best. *The Prophet Elisha*, by Krummacher.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

N. P. Willis' *Poems*, "The Shunammite."

R. Wilton's *Poems* on the prayer in the upper chamber.

Trench's *Poems*, "The Healing of the Waters," and "The Law of Love," on the widow's oil filling the jars.

Longfellow's "Resignation."

THE LESSON IN ART.

Elijah Raising the Shunammite's Son, by Von Schnorr*.

Elisha Mocked, by Holbein.

We gain our best idea of the character and work of Elisha from a collection of stories concerning him which immediately follow the story of Elijah in 2 Kings. We can do no better for our classes than to take as the subject of our Lesson to-day:

Some Characteristic Stories of Elisha.

I. **The Story of the Prophet's Mantle,** 2 Kings 2: 13, 14. The promise of Elijah that if Elisha saw him ascend, then he might know that he was to be his successor had been fulfilled. This might be confirmed by the fact that Elijah's mantle, his familiar prophet-dress, fell from him as he went up in the whirlwind, and was a confirmatory legacy, so that Elisha might appear to the people to be a prophet like his master.

But, like Gideon with the fleece, Elisha would like to make another test before he entered upon his work. He was standing by the river Jordan. The sons of the prophets from Jericho were looking on. The river must be crossed. He held the mantle with which Elijah smote the waters, when a way through them had been opened by Elijah's God. Therefore if he was really Elijah's successor, with the same mantle, the same spirit, the same work to do, then God would open a similar pathway through the river for Elisha. Folding up the mantle, and smiting the waters, as his master had done, he exclaimed, **Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?** and the way was opened, and assurance was made doubly sure.

NOTE 1. It is a great power for good when we can *know* that we are doing the work God wants us to do. Dr. Bushnell has well said, that "every human soul has a complete and perfect plan cherished for it in the heart of God." (See Lesson II.) How inspiring it is to know that our seemingly commonplace lives may be lived after a plan made by the wisdom and love of God.

NOTE 2. It is a good thing to test the promises of God. Try them, put them into action. One man used to write on the Margin of his Bible "T." or "T. and P." against the promises. Some had in his experience been Tried, others Tried and Proved.

NOTE 3. Elijah's mantle did not mean that Elisha did the same deeds, but that he had the same spirit, manifested in a different way, and working toward the same end. It is not likely that the mantle was worn continually by Elisha, for he was more a dweller in cities than in deserts. We do not need to dress our bodies or our thoughts in the clothes of our ancestors in order to carry out their spirit.

II. **The Story of the Purified Fountain,** 2 Kings 2: 19–22. Coming to Jericho, where there was a guild of the Sons of the Prophets, Elisha had an opportunity of using his power of service as a prophet. The citizens of Jericho came to him for help because the water supply was very bad for both the people and the land.

The city was beautifully situated, in that region called "the garden of the Lord"; "on a broad plain traversed by an abundant river, shaded by groves of palm-trees, the air scented with aromatic shrubs. Two perennial springs of bright sweet water send their streams across the plain to the Jordan scattering even at the hottest season the richest and most grateful vegetation." — *Cook.*

But at that time "there was but a bitter, brackish rivulet" from a fountain, probably the present spring *Ain es Sultan* "the fountain of Elisha." The water was bad, producing death (v. 21) and the ground barren, causing the fruit trees to cast their fruit.

They brought Elisha a new bowl or dish, and put salt therein, both typical of purity and freshness. Taking these with him he went up the stream to the fountain head a mile and a half from the town, and cast the salt into it, saying, **Thus saith THE LORD, I have healed these waters.** This clearly shows that the salt was "not the means whereby the healing was wrought, but only as an outward sign to point to the work which was supernaturally performed." — *Cambridge Bible.* Salt would naturally make the water worse, not better; and even if it were helpful, one dish of salt could not purify a spring that supplied a whole city with water, much less make it permanently good.

It was like the clay with which Jesus anointed the eyes of the blind man.

NOTE 1. The world is like this city of Jericho. "Very good," as God made it, a wonderfully beautiful and happy world, marvelous in its resources for the good of men; but the moral condition is, to a large extent, very bad. Christians are to be the salt of the earth. They are like Elisha to send the healing of the Gospel to all the sources of moral conduct. They are to carry its consolations to all needs and sorrows. The waters must be healed at the fountain head. That religion which changes the heart is the only effective religion. Not commerce, nor the arts of civilization, nor the treasures of literature, but the Gospel, can purify the springs of the world, and bring the millennium. You cannot make a marble palace out of street mud. You cannot make the kingdom of heaven out of moral Thersites and Calibans. You cannot make a Golden age out of leaden material. The one essential is the making of good citizens. Purify the fountain. Only from this standpoint can he look who

> . . . "dipt into the future, far as human eye can see,
> Saw the vision of the World and all the wonder that could be;
> Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled,
> In the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World."

NOTE 2. Generations pass but the fountain flows on. "Men may come and men may go, but I flow on forever." It was like the irrigating streams made by the Moors five centuries ago near the walls of Grenada in Spain, which, amidst all the changes of race and religion, have never ceased to flow. "Their empire has fallen, their creed has been suppressed by fire and sword, their nation has been driven from the shores of Spain, and their palaces crumble into ruins; but this trace of their beneficial civilization still continues; and that which was good, and wise, and generous, in that gifted but unhappy race, still lives on to cheer and refresh their enemies and conquerors.

"Even so it is with the good deeds of those who have gone before us. A thing of goodness, like a thing of beauty, is a joy forever."— *Dean Stanley.*

III. **The Story of the Hoodlum Gang,** 2 Kings 2: 23, 24. Elisha left Jericho and went up into the hills a few miles to the highlands where was Bethel with its two moral

fountains — one the Guild of the Prophets of Jehovah, the other the seat of one of Jeroboam's Golden Calves.

Almost the first fruit of irreligion in a community is seen in the boys and young men. A rabble of these went out when Elisha was seen approaching with Elijah's mantle over his shoulders. They were not merely little children, for the Hebrew word is applied to Isaac when a young man (Gen. 22: 12), to Joseph when 17 years old (Gen. 37: 2), to Gideon's son Jether when old enough to slay two kings (Judg. 8: 20), to Solomon when old enough to rule as king (1 Kings 3: 7), to Elisha's servant Gehazi (2 Kings 9: 4). They are called "little" because they were not grown men; and moreover, "whenever there is a mob of idle young men, there is sure to be a number of mischievous urchins to shout and bawl as they do." Kitto calls attention to the fact that the epithet "little" is dropped where the reference is to the 42 who were torn by the bears, so that there is every reason to believe that these 42 were the older ones, the ringleaders of the set.

This rabble crowded around Elisha as he was walking near the city and shouted in mockery, "Go up, thou bald head!" It is possible that Elisha was bald; but it is not probable, as he was in the prime of life, having nearly 60 years before him. It is more probable that the expression was but a scurrilous epithet, such as is now used sometimes in India of people with abundant hair. Baldness in those days was chiefly the result of leprosy, and implied loathsome disease, moral worthlessness, and mental imbecility. "Go up" was a sneer at Elisha's claims to be the successor of Elijah, of whose ascension they had heard. "If you are a prophet like Elijah, then go up to heaven like him." They had known Elisha as the gentle servant of Elijah, and would put down his ambitions to take his master's place. They dared insult him. They would not have dared to so insult Elijah.

It has been surmised that these were the sons of idolatrous parents, who were bitter partizans against the prophets of Jehovah, and carried out the feelings of their elders in their own insulting way.

Elisha turned back and "cursed them in the name of the LORD." He did not swear at them. It is not said that he was angry. But they were doing all they could to dishonor God, and his religion, and his representative; doing all they could to destroy his influence over themselves and over others. And Elijah pronounces a curse on them. He showed them that such conduct led to such curses as Moses pronounced on those who disobeyed God. The end of that way was moral death. It was a warning of love. So Christ, no doubt in a far higher spirit than Elisha could have attained, said, "Woe unto you, Pharisees." Because their course was certain to lead to the destruction of their nation. But he said it with tears, he said it with a love that was willing to die that they might escape them.

An unbeliever once said to a minister that he could not see how a loving Jesus could speak such cruel words as his "Woes" in Matthew 23, speaking the "Woe" in an angry tone. The minister uttered the same word in tones so full of tenderness and sorrow, that his friend said he could now understand how Jesus with a heart full of love could have spoken them.

Then there came up two she bears and tore 42 of them. It is not said Elisha summoned the bears, or wanted them to come. Nor is it said that the bears killed the boys, as so many have mis-stated. Even Farrar speaks of Elisha as dooming the 42 to "a horrible and agonizing death." The Bible does not say so.

A few days ago at the time of this writing there occurred in a park, less than a mile from my study, an event that throws light on this event. Some wild animals caged there during the summer, were being transferred to other cages in order to transport them to Cuba for a winter menagerie. Three keepers were trying with clubs to persuade a leopardess to enter the cage, when she sprang upon them and "tore" them, so that the doctor had to dress fifty wounds, so he told me. They were not killed, nor so seriously injured but that the worst torn left for Cuba the next day.

The she bears came by some providence and furnished the necessary punishment that the boys needed.

NOTE. That irreverence toward God and religion, — irreverence in the Sunday school and prayermeeting, jeering at those who are trying to be better, making light of the holiest things in conversation, and profanity, — does more harm morally to the boys and girls who indulge in it, than the two bears did to the 42 who insulted God in the person of his prophet.

IV. **The Story of the Borrowed Oil Jars,** 2 Kings 4: 1–7. One of the sons of the prophets died and left his widow and two sons in poverty. She was so poor as to be in

danger of having her children sold as slaves. Her husband may have left her in debt, or she had run in debt, perhaps through her husband's sickness. Her creditors demanded their money, and, as she could not pay it, they threatened to take her two sons for slaves, to work out the debt. In her trouble she appealed to Elisha as the head of the guild, and as one who had been helping others.

HER ASSETS. She had nothing left but a pot of olive oil.

THE PROPHET'S ADVICE. Elisha bade the woman borrow empty vessels from her neighbors, and bringing them into her house, with closed doors, to pour out from her own jar of oil till every dish and jar was full. This oil she was to sell and pay her debt.

THE RESULT was according to the prophet's word. Every vessel she had faith enough to borrow was filled with the miraculous oil. Her debt was paid, and her children saved from slavery. *According to her faith it was done unto her.*

NOTE 1. That this method of giving was a spiritual training. She would have many anxieties and cares, but she had found the way to relief.

NOTE 2. This story set forth vividly a great principle.

Guest Chamber, Showing Stairs Leading to the Roof.

ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH. Every vessel she borrowed was filled with the miraculous oil. Then the flow stopped. She put her own limit to the amount she received. So it is with us, ever according to our faith as shown by our works. This shows our fitness to receive; how much we can really use for good. God loves to give. He has measureless spiritual and temporal blessings for the world, for the church, for each individual, waiting for their faithful asking and their fitness to receive. The larger our asking by praying and by doing, the more is God honored. He will fill full whatever we present to him, whether it be a teacup or an ocean bed.

"From every one of His servants to the end of time, if you give them the Capernaum measure of faith, you shall have from them the Capernaum measure of works, and no more." — *Ruskin.*

V. **The Story of the Woman Who Entertained a Prophet,** 2 Kings 4: 8–37. There were no hotels in the East, and travelers depended largely on the hospitality of the people. About three miles north of Jezreel, at Shunem, lived a wealthy and religious family, who often entertained Elisha as he passed through the village on foot to attend to his religious work. The wife at length built upon her house an upper room, with access by an outside stairway, for Elisha's especial accommodation. It gave him a home and welcome. Here were, as usual, a bed, a table, a seat or couch, a lamp with its stand.

THE FAMILY consisted only of the man, his wife, and their retinue of servants. They were well-to-do farmers, independent, religious, reverential. V. 23 implies that they went to religious meetings. The family name is unknown.

THE HOME. The center of power for building up a country in virtue, religion, and prosperity lies in the home. The battle of Science has for its central point the origin of life; the religious warfare centers around the Cross, the Alcyone of all religious forces; the moral battle is about the Home. Mrs. Hunt says that the Star of Bethlehem for temperance stands over the Schoolhouse. But the Star of Bethlehem for morals and religion stands over the Home. Good homes, or bad homes, decide the future of our country.

The daily home duties are one of the very best schools for building up a noble character. There is something in the home to train each virtue and each grace. On this tree may grow every fruit of the Spirit. Home does not narrow, it broadens. What nobler work is there than training immortal souls for immortal life? Where better can be found the golden stairway to heaven!

"Wherever a true woman comes," says Ruskin, "home is always around her. The stars may be over her head, the glow-worms in the night-cold grass may be the fire at her foot, but home is where she is."

HOSPITALITY in the Home is a great religious power. It is one of the essentials of a perfect home. Personal influences from outside bring fresh life and vitality into the family life, and break up the narrowness of thought and life. The presence of such a person as the prophet in any home is an unmeasured blessing, for he brings with him the breath of heaven, inspiration, spiritual life, mental awakening, broadening sympathies. I once read of a young man who advertised for a family boarding place where his good Christian example would be a sufficient compensation for his board. There are many people whose presence in a home would be an unspeakable blessing, like the Ark of God in the house of Obed-edom when "the Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household."

I know a pastor who lays aside a considerable part of his salary for the express purpose of gaining a hold on individuals and families by entertaining them at his house. And this is one of the most effective methods of the Sunday school teacher with his class.

ELISHA EXPRESSES HIS APPRECIATION. The woman asked no reward, but Elisha wished to express his gratitude and appreciation of her kindness, and he did it in three ways.

(1) The prophet having influence at Court, he offered to say a good word for her husband that he might receive advancement at the capital from the king or the general of the army; "just the sort of favor which an Oriental would be likely to value most." She declined with thanks.

(2) Then, finding that her life was like the city of Jericho, beautiful for situation, but wanting in one great blessing, in that she was childless, Elisha promised from the Lord that within a year she should "embrace a son." A Western woman can hardly realize how great a sorrow such misfortunes are to her oriental sisters. Indeed it is a real misfortune for any family to be without children. The care and training of children is one of the best possible means of training older people in the whole list of virtues and graces.

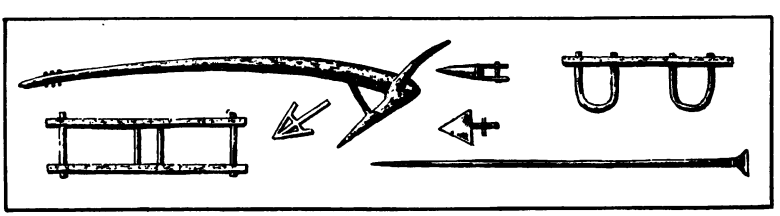
(3) Years afterwards Elisha was the means of restoring to her her home and property, which had been unjustly taken from her during her absence (2 Kings 8: 1–6).

SICKNESS AND DEATH IN THE FAMILY. Several years later, when the child had grown to be quite a boy, he went one morning into the harvest fields with his father, and was taken suddenly ill, probably with sunstroke, followed by inflammation of the brain. "I know by experience," says Thomson, "that this valley glows like a furnace in harvest time." The boy was sent home to his mother, who held him till noon, when he died. She took him up to the little chamber on the roof and laid him on the prophet's bed.

THE MOTHER GOES TO ELISHA FOR HELP, vs. 22–31. Elisha at this time was at Mt. Carmel, sixteen miles away. The mother knows the only thing to be done. She calls for one of the servants, has an ass saddled, and presses forward with the utmost speed to the prophet.

25. The man of God saw her afar off. From his hilltop, looking down into the valley.

26. Run now. Elisha knew that only some matter of great importance could bring a woman there. **Is it well with thee?** Hebrew, "Is it peace to thee?" **And she**



Plowshares, Yokes and Goad.

25. So she went, and came unto the man of God [1] to mount Car'mel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Ge-hā'zī his servant, Behold, *yonder is* that yonder is the Shu'nam-mīte:

26. Run now, run, I pray thee, now to meet her, and say unto her, *Is it* Is it well with thee? *is it* is it well with thy husband? *is it* is it well with the child? And she answered, *It is* It is well.

27. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the hold of his feet: but And Ge-hā'zī came near to thrust her away; and but the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* is [a] vexed within her; and the LORD hath hid *it* it from me, and hath not told me.

28. Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? [2] did I not say, Do not deceive me?

29. Then he said to Ge-hā'zī, [3] Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, [4] salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and [5] lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30. And the mother of the child said, [6] *As* As the LORD liveth, and *as* as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

31. And Ge-hā'zī passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but *there was* there was neither voice, nor [b] hearing. Wherefore he went again returned to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is [7] not awaked.

32. And when E-lī'sha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* and laid upon his bed.

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[1] 2 Kings 2: 25.
[2] V. 16.
[3] 1 Kings 18: 46; 2 Kings 9: 1.
[4] Luke 10: 4.
[5] Ex. 7: 19; 14: 16; 2 Kings 2: 8, 14.
[6] 2 Kings 2: 2.
[7] John 11: 11.
a Heb., *bitter*. 1 Sam. 1: 10.
b Heb., *attention*.

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answered but one word, "Peace." The cautious mother wishes to have no words with the servant; it is his master that she is in quest of.

27. She caught him by the feet, etc. "The falling down, clasping the feet, etc., are actions witnessed every day in the East. I have had this done to me often before I could prevent it." — *Thomson*. **Gehazi came near to thrust her away.** Deeming her importunity excessive, or such liberties beneath his master's dignity, just as the disciples tried to drive away the mothers who brought their children to Jesus. **The Lord hath hid it from me.** His prayer for light had not yet been answered. Often the Lord had told him what was coming; but in this case he let him learn from the suppliant herself, as the best way for both.

28. Did I desire a son? Did I ask the favor? Was it not sent freely? Why, then, does the same power take it from me? She did not say, but implied that her son was dead.

29. Then he said to Gehazi. His attendant. **Gird up thy loins.** In preparation for a journey. **Take my staff.** His prophetic staff, the symbol of his authority. **If thou meet any man, salute him not.** The Jewish salutations, like those common in the Orient to-day, were elaborately formal, and occupied much time, sometimes two or three hours, so as to be a serious hindrance when there was reason for haste.

30. I will not leave thee. She had great faith in Elisha, but little in his staff. She wanted his presence, his personal sympathy and aid. Perhaps she knew more about Gehazi's character than did Elisha himself.

31. Gehazi . . . laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. His mission was a failure. The wrong man was behind the staff. It was the prophet who gave power to the staff. Gehazi was a bad conductor of the Spirit of Life.

ELISHA RESTORES THE CHILD TO LIFE, vs. 32–37. Elisha went with the Shunammite to her house, and found the child dead upon the bed in his chamber.

33. He [1] went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, [2] and prayed unto the LORD.

34. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and [3] he stretched himself upon [the child]him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35. Then he returned, and walked in the house [once] [a] to and fro; and went up, [4] and stretched himself upon him: and [5] the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36. And he called Ge-hā'zī, and said, Call this Shu'nam-mīte. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, [and] and she [6] took up her son, and went out.

[1] V. 4; Matt. 6: 6.
[2] 1 Kings 17: 20.
[3] 1 Kings 17: 21; Acts 20: 10.
[4] 1 Kings 17: 21.
[5] 2 Kings 8: 1, 5.
[6] 1 Kings 17: 23.
[a] Heb., *once hither, and once thither.*

33. He . . . shut the door upon them twain, and prayed. Thus, like Jacob wrestling alone with the angel for the blessing, could the prophet come into closest communion with God, and learn his will. Prayer makes the heart a channel for God's blessings. Gifts through prayer are doubly blessed, the spiritual life is increased, the character sanctified.

"The door is shut, but God is there,
The living God who answers prayer:
What will the issue be?
A glorious answer comes ere long,
A prayer is quenched in thankful song:
Where, Death, thy victory?"
— *Catherine Hankey.*

34. And he went up, and lay upon the child, etc. He used whatever means were in his power, though the means alone could never have brought the child to life. So James tells the elders who pray with the sick, to also anoint him with oil, one of the commoner remedies of the day. There were faint signs of life.

35. Then came another season of agonizing prayer, while the prophet walked to and fro. This was a new experience of what the Lord might do through him, and he could not know the Lord's will at once. **The child sneezed seven times, and . . . opened his eyes.** "These were the first acts of restored respiration, and they are described as successive steps." — *J. F., and B.*

36. Take up thy son. Compare Elijah's action (1 Kings 17: 23) and our blessed Lord's (Luke 7: 15).

37. She . . . fell at his feet. The first impulse, even before taking up her son. She was full of gratitude for the great blessing.

NOTE 1. Into every home come hours of bitter sorrow, strange providences which we cannot understand. The door through which help comes is the door of prayer, and the use of means which always belongs with prayer like a twin sister. The mother prayed and put her prayer in action. The prophet prayed and put his prayer in action. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

NOTE 2.

"In that chamber small
Where God our Father is in secret sought
What mighty prayers arose, what grace was shed,
And shows himself in mercy more and more!
What gifts were given, potent to wake the dead.
Dim upper rooms with God's own glory shine,
And souls are lifted to the life divine."
— *Rev. R. Wilton.*

"And still what miracles of grace are wrought
In many a lowly chamber, with shut door,

NOTE 3. It makes all the difference in the world whether the prophet or Gehazi is behind the staff. The best thing in a sermon is the man behind it. The most important thing in teaching is the teacher. The French king said, "I am the state." Very largely the preacher must say, "I am the sermon," and the teacher, "I am the lesson."

"The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."
— *Whittier.*

NOTE 4. God takes our children sometimes to his home; but he gives them new life in the eternal mansions. They are raised from the dead. They are not lost but gone before.

"There is no Death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life Elysian
Whose portal we call death.

"She is not dead, the child of our affection, —
But gone unto that school
Where she no longer needs our poor protection
And Christ himself doth rule."

— *Longfellow.*

LESSON XII. — March 19.

DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS. — 1 Kings 20: 12–21.

READ 1 Kings 20. COMMIT v. 13.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.* — PROV. 31: 4.

In choosing this story for the Temperance Lesson the Committee made a very wise and attractive plan, not only because the final defeat of the invaders was partly through drunkenness, but also because the whole campaign may be used as an allegory of the great Temperance warfare against intoxicating liquors.

Benhadad the Syrian King Invading the Land of Israel.

A TYPE OF

King Alcohol's Invasion of Our Country.

One Battle-ground of the Greatest Warfare in History, that of God's People and the Kingdom of Heaven against the Principalities, against the Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against the Spiritual Hosts of Wickedness in the Heavenly Places.

I. **Benhadad the King of Syria Invades Israel,** v. 1. TIME. This lesson belongs between Lessons VIII. and IX., during the latter part of Elijah's mission.

PLACE. The Syrian kingdom, with its capital at Damascus, adjoined Israel on the north. At this period, not long before the revived Assyrian power and aggression came in contact with Israel, Syria under Benhadad II. was the most powerful nation on the Mediterranean coast, and was normally a bitter enemy of northern Israel. It was always a group of related, but not united, petty kingdoms or tribes. See *Standard Bible Dic.*

RULERS. Ahab, king of Israel; Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; Benhadad II., king of Damascus and Syria.

Benhadad gathered together the 32 kings of the smaller tribes allied to his kingdom, and made an overpowering raid upon Israel, destroying villages, and farms, and orchards, paralyzing business, ravaging the homes, and driving the people to the more strongly fortified towns. They were like "a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, a flood of mighty waters overflowing, an overwhelming scourge." These epithets describe in vivid speech the irresistible violence, the devastating force with which the Syrians were about to overwhelm them. It is almost impossible for us to realize the devastating power of such half-savage hordes who lived upon the country, who ravaged villages, who murdered women and children, who had an unrestrained power. They were worse than the ten plagues of Egypt.

What the invaders sought was the wealth, the harvests, and all kinds of valuables, without paying for them, and entirely without regard to the welfare of the people.

The Modern Invasion of King Alcohol and His Allies. Into our goodly country Intemperance, from drinking alcoholic liquors, has come and is doing our country more damage, to its people, to its wealth and prosperity, than the Syrians did to Palestine, the Promised Land, by their invasion.

King Alcohol comes with an army of tributaries and allies, such as the 240,000 saloons, the distilleries, breweries, hotels, clubs, personal invitations to drink, advertisements in magazines and papers, cocaine and opium habits. All invading us for the sake of their own personal gain at the expense of the community.

II. **The Demands of the Invaders,** vs. 2–4. When the invaders had reached the

capital with their army, and horses and chariots, in an unresisted march, Benhadad sent messengers to Ahab demanding that he yield up his throne, which is implied in his imperious conceit of power: **Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine.**

And Ahab was so overwhelmed at the power backing the demand, that he basely yielded, and replied: **My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.**

Such Are the Demands of King Alcohol! From a late *Westminster Teacher* I quote an excellent way of showing what Intemperance demands of our country, by a new use of the SERPENTS IN THE WINE GLASS, by Rev. I. Elmer Russell.

"To a group of nine boys, who meet as a club in my home once in two weeks, I had for some time been desirous of presenting, in some unforgettable way, the dangers of liquor drinking. I finally hit upon an object talk which is so simple, and which proved of so much interest to the boys, that I describe it here, in the hope that Sunday school teachers may find something in it which they can adapt to their classes.

"From circles of paper about two inches in diameter I cut out little serpents, dotting the eyes and tongue with a pencil. Then on a coil of each of the serpents I wrote the name of one of the results of drinking; such as, 'Poverty,' 'Ragged Clothes,' 'Tumble-down House,' 'Accidents,' 'Crime,' 'Quarreling,' 'Unhappy Homes,' 'Losing Work,' 'Powerful Appetite,' 'Tuberculosis,' 'Insanity,' 'Epilepsy,' 'Delirium Tremens,' and 'Lost Soul.'

"After labeling the serpents I placed them in an ordinary table goblet, and covered it over with a paper napkin. When the boys came in and were seated in a circle, I brought in the covered goblet on a small stand and placed it before the leader of the club for the evening.

"I had said nothing to the boys in advance about the evening's programme, and they were very curious as to what might be the purpose of the glass, and as to what was hidden under the napkin.

"Several futile guesses were made, and then I told them that the goblet represented a wine glass and that it contained several snakes. 'Live ones?' exclaimed two or three boys. And to help them realize that we were dealing with an illustration, I reminded them of that clause of Scripture, 'At the last it biteth like a serpent,' and remarked that each serpent in the glass would stand for one of the evil results of drinking.

"The interest and attention of everyone being thus secured, the leader uncovered the goblet, and one of the boys reached in and drew out a serpent. It happened to be 'Delirium Tremens.' We paused for a couple of minutes to discuss the subject of delirium tremens, and then the goblet was uncovered again and another serpent withdrawn by another boy for further discussion by the club.

"Upon some of the more unfamiliar results of liquor drinking I brought some fresh information. For example, when the serpent named 'Tuberculosis, or Consumption,' was drawn, I told them that a student of the subject in Prussia, had found that while Protestant clergymen die of consumption at the low rate of 70 per thousand, that bartenders die of consumption at the very high rate of 556 per thousand. (See *McClure's*, for March, 1909, page 565.) Upon the same authority I told them that 28 per cent of the men in the insane hospitals of New York State owe their insanity to liquor drinking; and that of the 160,000 epileptics in this country 32,000 are the children of intemperate parents."

GLADSTONE AND TEMPERANCE. An Englishwoman, who was brought up in Hawarden Castle Orphanage, is responsible for the following. It was learned by heart at Mr. Gladstone's request, by every boy or girl who was trained at Hawarden Castle. The orphans were also often spoken to seriously about temperance by Mr. Gladstone himself.

On Drunkenness.

Drunkenness expels reason.
Drowns the memory.
Distempers the body.
Defaces beauty.
Diminishes strength.
Inflames the blood.
Causes internal, external, and incurable wounds.
It's a witch to the senses,
A devil to the soul.
A thief to the purse.
A beggar's companion.
A wife's woe and children's sorrow.
It makes man become a beast and self-murderer.
He drinks to others' good health.
And robs himself of his own.

—*National Advocate.*

12. And it came to pass, when *Běn–hă'dăd* heard this [a] message, as he [was / was] [1] drinking, he and the kings in the [b] pavilions, that he said unto his servants, [c] Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

[1] V. 16.
[a] Heb., *word*.
[b] Or, *huts*.
[c] Or, *Place* the engines: *And they placed* engines.

The cost of liquors each year in this country as given in the *American Grocer* is nearly $1,400,000,000. According to the London *Times* the drink bill in England in 1908 was over $800,000,000.

"Take the national liquor bill and divide it by the number of saloons and $5,945 becomes the average cost to the people of each saloon. On the average the saloon pays back for nation, state, and city taxes $500. This $500 is eagerly taken from a grateful country in lieu of $5,945."— *Methodist S. S. Journal.*

Thus King Alcohol demands our homes, our wives, our husbands, our silver and gold. And we have yielded too easily to its demands.

III. **The Exorbitant Demands Arouse Resistance,** vs. 5–9. Benhadad then sent word that his officers were coming and would search Ahab's house for every pleasant thing he had and would take it away. And not only Ahab's house, but the houses of his officers and leaders.

This caused a revolt. The king summoned his leading people to a conference, and they decided not to yield to the demands of Benhadad. The weak Ahab declared that for himself he would yield all he had promised, but he must deny the increased demand.

King Alcohol became so greedy in his demands; the results of his evil work became so great; that the people were aroused in indignation against him. At first it was agreed to allow wine and beer, and moderate drinking, but to resist the ravages of the more fiery drinks.

But this was a failure, for it was simply one way of realizing the verse

"The drunkards will never be dead,
I'll tell you the reason why —
For a new one comes to take his place
As fast as the old ones die."

Temperance societies were formed. Local and state prohibition were inaugurated. Investigations made. Pledges taken.

IV. **The Renewed Attack. A Fatal Mistake,** vs. 10–12, 16. Benhadad was so sure of the victory that he boasted that his army was so large that all the dust and soil of Samaria would not suffice to give his soldiers a handful apiece.

Ahab replied with the proverb, **Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off.**

Compare Solon's proverb, "Praise a fair day at night"; and the Latin, "Ne triumphum canas ante victoriam," "never sing songs of triumph before the victory."

In their self confidence Benhadad and his 32 kings were (v. 12) **drinking** themselves drunk (v. 16) **in the pavilions,** i. e. temporary booths. The great king shouted one word to his allies: — "SET," i. e. set the armies in array, set the battering rams and engines of attack in their place. The Septuagint has "Build a stockade, and they set a stockade against the city."

King Alcohol often defeats himself by the effects of his own liquors. One of the effects of moderate drinking is to distort the judgment, to make things seem what they are not.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "A number of gentlemen in the State of New York came together to value certain parcels of land which were to be offered at public sale. They agreed unanimously upon the sum they were worth; but upon the day of the sale the owner cunningly treated them to alcoholic drinks, and one of them bid and actually paid four times as much for the property as he or any other man in his right senses thought it worth. A temperance man, having some standing timber to be disposed of at public sale, decided that he would not furnish any alcoholic liquors to the bidders, as was the custom in that day. The auctioneer replied: 'I am sorry, for you will lose a great deal of money. I know how it works, for after men have been drinking the trees look much larger to them than they did before.' A vendue master in Connecticut said: 'I have often in this way got more than ten times the

13. And, behold, there came a prophet came near unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, [1] I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am am the LORD.

14. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the [a] young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall [b] order begin the battle? And he answered, Thou.

15. Then he numbered mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered mustered all the people, even even all the children of Israel, being being seven thousand.

16. And they went out at noon. But Běn-hā'dăd was was [2] drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

[1] V. 28.
[2] V. 12; 1 Kings 16: 9.

[a] Or, *servants*.
[b] Heb., *bind*, or, *tie*.

value of the drinks that I have furnished.' Horse jockeys, gamblers, thieves, wholesale merchants, and commercial travelers often furnish alcoholic drinks for similar purposes." — *Julia Coleman*.

V. **The Divine Source of Victory,** v. 13. In their great distress a prophet came to King Ahab with a message from Jehovah: **Hast thou seen all this great multitude? I will deliver it into thine hand this day.**

Why? **And thou shalt know that I am the LORD.**

The victory was wrought to bring them back to the true God, to obedience and worship; which was vastly more important to their true welfare than the loss of all their property could have been.

God, the true religion, is the one source of victory over the power of intemperance. Religious motives and inspiration, love to God and love to man, the spirit of service, loyalty to the coming of the kingdom of God, — these are the sources of salvation from the curse of strong drink. The Leader, Jesus Christ the everliving, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, the Great Cause and aim of the Christian, the transformation of this world into the kingdom of God — these are, and always have been, the source of victory over all the principalities and powers of evil.

VI. **The Human Instrumentality,** vs. 14, 15. **And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD,** BY THE YOUNG MEN OF THE PRINCES OF THE PROVINCES.

WHO **shall order the battle? And he answered,** THOU — the king, the head of the nation.

He numbered, mustered, **two hundred and thirty two** of the young princes. These went out first.

After them he mustered **seven thousand** citizen soldiers to follow up the victory.

For the War Against Temperance. In the forefront of the battle are the young men and women. The teaching of temperance in the day schools and in the Sunday schools; the societies of young people, the Bands of Hope, the loyal Temperance Legion, the various temperance organizations, like the Good Templars, largely consisting of young people, — are the most hopeful instruments for overcoming intemperance.

"The year 1908 goes down in history as the one most remarkable in the battle against the saloon. The boys who have been taught the quarterly Temperance Lessons in the Sunday school during the past 18 years, are the men who are to-day marching to the polls and dropping their ballots into the election boxes, declaring their opposition to the saloon. The members of the men's Bible classes in Ohio, Illinois and other states have probably been more instrumental in wiping out saloons of those states than any other agency." — *Texas Star*.

Then follow the great number of the older people and their organizations, the national and state Temperance societies, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, with its net-work of branches over the whole country, and many others led by heroic men and women.

There is room for heroic actions in this warfare, personal consecration at great sacrifice, heroic stands against social drinking and popular favor, heroic victories over temptation.

"The most heroic figures of our age are the scientists like Pasteur, who discovered the cure of hydrophobia, or the physicians like those who built their huts and lived for weeks in the malarial swamps of the Roman Campagna, that they might discover the origin and cure of the malarial fever. We have developed a new kind of courage — not the courage of anger, such as we see in Achilles, not that of patriotism, such as we see in Cromwell or Bismarck, but the *courage of kindness*.

"The bravest men in the modern world are those who are possessed by an overmastering enthusiasm for humanity, and constantly risk their lives in order to help their brother men." — *President H. P. Faunce, LL.D.* These are worthy of MEDALS OF HONOR such as are "conferred by the President of the United States in the name of Congress, for most distinguished service or extraordinary heroism in action." As few boys have seen this medal, while all should be stirred by it to patriotic service for their country of every kind, a description and cut are here given.

THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR in its latest design, 1905. "The medal is made of silver, heavily electroplated in gold, this departure from the use of gun metal being necessary as the base metals would not carry the enameling hereinafter mentioned. The chief feature of the old medal, the five-pointed star, has been retained, and in its center appears the head of the heroic Minerva, the highest symbol of wisdom and righteous war. Surrounding this central feature in circular form are the words 'United States of America,' representing nationality. An open laurel wreath, enameled in green, encircles the star, and the oak leaves at the bases of the prongs of the star are likewise enameled in green to give them prominence.

"The medal is suspended by a blue silk ribbon, spangled with thirteen white stars representing the original States, and this ribbon is attached to an eagle supported upon a horizontal bar. Upon the bar, which is attached to two points of the star, appears the word 'Valor,' indicative of the distinguished service represented by the medal.

"The reverse side of the medal is engraved with the name of the person honored and the place and date of the distinguished service for which awarded." — *Official Description sent by the War Department.*

ONE EXAMPLE. In September, 1909, there was an immense Temperance parade in Chicago, of which one observer said:

"I heard Saturday the greatest temperance sermon I ever heard. It was ten miles long and contained 40,000 points. It was an expression of the finest sentiment of this city."

"Like a crusade of the olden days was the march of the temperance legions through the downtown streets of the city yesterday afternoon. To the tune of an old air the paraders sang a song that 'Chicago's Going Dry,' and what was left unsung in hymns of the strength of the temperance wave was printed on thousands of banners, posters, and placards. To make the picture complete, realistic scenes were enacted on floats, showing everything from the drunkard's home, the 'poor man's club,' washday at home, the lives of drunkards' children, to those happy homes and persons where liquor had been routed.

"At the head of the procession rode Major-Gen. Frederick Dent Grant. At Congress Street the son of the great civil war hero withdrew from the ranks and reviewed the marchers, doffing his hat constantly for nearly two hours to white-robed women, militant youths, and the squadrons of ministers and anti-saloon workers.

"From time to time a casket, representing the death of King Alcohol, passed before the reviewing army man, and he bowed on each occasion."

"General Frederick Dent Grant, commander of the Department of the Lakes, United States Army, has often been quoted as an advocate of total abstinence, and his words have weighed heavy, but all he has said has never counted for half as much as will the simple fact of his appearance in the streets of Chicago at the head of a temperance parade. When he consented to marshal this demonstration, he made it an imposing

Congressional Medal of Honor which is conferred by the President of the United States, in the name of Congress, for most distinguished service or extraordinary heroism in action.

17. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Běn-hā'dăd sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out [of from] Sa-mā'rĭ-a.

18. And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19. So these [went out of the city, the] young men of the princes of the provinces [came out of the city,] and the army which followed them.

20. And they slew every one his man: and the Syr'ĭ-ans fled: and Israel pursued them: and Běn-hā'dăd the king of Syr'ĭ-a escaped on an horse with [the] horsemen.

21. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syr'ĭ-ans with a great slaughter.

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and influential event. *It is rather a rare piece of moral courage for him to accept a position in which a man might easily suspect no small danger of unpopularity and scorn.* But General Grant's part in it honors the paraders and will honor him." — *Interior* (Presbyterian), Chicago.

"The sudden unexpected prominence of Gen. F. D. Grant as a possible prohibition candidate for the Presidency is explained by his alleged statement in an interview: 'If I could by offering my body as a sacrifice free this country from this fell cancer, the demon drink, I'd thank the Almighty for the privilege of doing it. If I had the greatest appointive power in the country, no man would get even the smallest appointment from me unless he showed proof of his absolute teetotalism.' Such tests for office would be novel, under the Constitution, and many place-hunters would fall by the wayside if Gen. Grant were in the White House." — *Springfield Republican.*

"The parade is one of the most remarkable demonstrations I ever had the pleasure of viewing. I wish particularly to compliment General Grant on the stand he has taken in favor of total abstinence. His was a distinctly noble act, and it will have a beneficent effect, country wide in extent." — *Archbishop John Ireland*, St. Paul, Minn.

VII. **The Rapid Progress Toward Victory,** vs. 17–21. The 232 young men worthy to be called princes went out from Samaria in the noonday heat toward the immense Syrian army, who were naturally resting in seeming safety, taking their siesta while the king and his officers were carousing and unprepared for attack. They were so few that the king merely bid his servants to take them alive. But few as they were, few and heroic as the Spartan three hundred at Thermopylæ against the Persian hosts, the valorous youths "clashed into the midst of the unwieldy, unprepared, ill-handled Syrian host, and by their first slaughter created one of those fearful panics which have often been the destruction of Eastern hosts. The Syrians, whose army was made up of heterogeneous forces, and which could not be managed by 34 half-intoxicated feudatories of differing interests and insecure allegiance, were doubtless afraid that internal treachery must have been at work. Like the Midianites, like Zerah's Ethiopian host, like the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, like the Ammonites and Moabites in the wilderness of Tekoa, like the army of Sennacherib, like the enormous and motley hosts of Persia at Marathon, at Platæa, and at Arbela, they were instantly flung into irremediable confusion which tended every moment to be more fatal to itself." — *Farrar.* The citizen army of 7,000 followed, and the victory was won. But it was only one battle of a war, and the Syrians returned after a season to a new invasion.

General Frederick Dent Grant.

The Victory Over King Alcohol has been partly gained but the battle is going on.
Prohibition has made an immense stride the last few years.
Business men are favoring it more than ever before on business principles.
Time fails us to tell the story of the victories.
But an immense host still remains to be conquered.

LESSON XIII. — March 26.

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* — PSA. 144: 15.

Subject: The First Century of the Divided Kingdom and Its Lessons.

The object was to Develop and Train a People of God, through whom to Make the Whole World a People of God. Salvation for the Individual and for the Human Race.

THE UNITED KINGDOM did a great work in this direction. But the time came when there was danger of its failure. Hence

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM through which there was a double experiment in the development of the kingdom of God.

THE PERIOD covered by the lessons of this quarter was about 90 years, B.C. 982 to 893 (or, Assyrian, 939–850).

THE COUNTRY was Palestine within its usual boundaries.

THE MAP, AND THE CHART should be carefully studied and used together as the best means of making the history clear.

THE COURSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT runs in two lines.

(1) The Royal, the course as represented by the kings, the Civil History.

(2) The Religious development, represented largely by the prophets.

The Kingdom of Judah.

Was about half as large as Israel.

Its capital was Jerusalem, and the Temple was the religious center.

Large numbers of the more religious people came to Judah from Israel.

Judah was sheltered from attack on the north by Israel's being between them and the nearest and most dangerous enemies, while a desert was a great defence on the south.

This position also saved them from close contact with heathenism and its degradations.

THE LEADING KINGS were (1) Rehoboam, 17 years; (3) Asa, 40 years; (4) Jehoshaphat, 25 years.

Under Asa and Jehoshaphat there were great religious revivals and religious reforms, alternating with declines.

Here was a great struggle between good and evil, and the good seems to have gained.

In a few cases there were revelations from God. He did everything he could to keep the people obedient to his laws, and train them in the religious life, that they might be the kingdom of God to bless the world.

There were a few prophets of whom little is known save their names.

NOTE. The conflict of religion with evil in Judah, though not ending in complete victory, made a decided gain for the right.

"Why do we celebrate and praise our forefathers? Not simply because they were stout-hearted. Many a freebooter and many a soldier of fortune has been that. It is because they were stout-hearted for an ideal, their ideal and ours, civil and religious liberty; and wherever and whenever men and women thus devote themselves to ideal and not material things, there the world's heroes are born, and born to be free.

"Some blessings come to us, not in spite of, but just because of, our hostile environ-

ment. The stimulus of hostile climate produces the robust race. Where nature always smiles and everything is friendly there is no such thing as beneficent discipline, and a soft, languid race is perpetuated. The man of the temperate zone owes his superior physical vigor, his keener mental capacity, his alertness, his inventiveness, very much to the climatic conditions under which he lives. He is forced to activity, and so he quickly outstrips his languid neighbor of the tropics.

"It is only when a man, or a nation, or an ideal is opposed that we discover its real worth.

"Truth can only be won by freedom and the uses of freedom. Truth is to be found by approaching it from all sides, by generous rivalries, by the Christian conflict of differently constituted minds.

"If life were all a smooth road, would we not all grow sleepy? People who take passage through the world in easy chairs, if they avoid some of the troubles, miss also most of the joys of living." — *Rev. Dr. S. A. Eliot* in *Forefather's Day Address.*

The Kingdom of Israel.

Contained 9,400 square miles.

It was a much more fertile country than Judah.

Its territory lay between Judah and Syria, so that it was in close contact on three sides with heathen nations, who had the activity and physical qualities of tribes which loved excursions into other countries for the booty.

ITS KINGS. Of the nine kings parallel with the four kings of Judah, it is worth while to remember (1) Jeroboam, 22 years; (6) Omri, 12; (7) Ahab, 22. Jezebel, Ahab's heathen queen, was the most influential factor in the religious decline.

The kingdom was subject to revolutions, and the nine kings of this period belong to five dynasties.

From the first there was religious deterioration, from the worship of Jehovah by golden calves to the worship of Baal with all its licentious rites. So that true religion was almost obliterated.

THE MOABITE STONE with its records of this time is still preserved in the Louvre, Paris.

Here the true religion in its conflict with heathenism suffered an almost entire and desperate defeat for a time. But there was a rally and reformation under Elijah and Elisha; which was continued and advanced by Jehu, through his annihilation of Jezebel and her children.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA. The stories of these hero-prophets should become familiar in their main incidents to all the children, who can see what brave, heroic men can do, when they are in earnest for the right. Elijah preached God Almighty, his truth, his laws, his power to help, and the absolute necessity of being loyal to him, if the individual or the nation would prosper by a life worth the living.

THE LESSON STORY BOOKS.

For all who have made these books, an excellent Review can be made by means of them.

And for all the children the teacher can make a most profitable Review by a plan used by a successful friend. He took a large sheet of heavy paper, say 12 by 15 inches, and drawing a line down the center, on the left hand side wrote a series of questions in letters so large as to be easily seen by all the class. On the right side of the line he wrote the answers. These questions were given to the class, and they read the answers two or three times. Then the paper was folded in the middle, so that the answers were out of sight, while the questions were still before the class, and they were to show how well they had learned the lesson. Such a review can be made very effective in impressing upon the class the main facts of the Quarter.

Another sheet may have on it the most striking sentence sayings in the Quarter; on the left hand of the page being written either the subjects or first words.

THE POOL OF HEZEKIAH — JERUSALEM.

Old Well at Dothan.

SECOND QUARTER.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM, CAPTIVITY, AND RETURN.

APRIL 2 — JUNE 25, 1911.

LESSON I. — April 2.

ELISHA HEALS NAAMAN THE SYRIAN. — 2 Kings 5.

PRINT vs. 1-14. COMMIT vs. 13, 14. READ 2 Kings 3-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.— ***Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.*** — ISA. 45: 22.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read 2 Kings 3-5.
2. Read the laws regarding leprosy, Leviticus 13, 14; Deut. 24: 8; 2 Chron. 26: 21.
3. Compare the little Hebrew maid with other Bible children, such as Samuel, Solomon, Josiah, the lad at the feeding of the five thousand, Timothy.
4. On the practice of including garments among gifts of honor in the East see Gen. 41: 42; 45: 22; Esth. 6: 8; Dan. 5: 7.
5. For examples of rending the clothes, in mourning and at times of great excitement, see Gen. 37: 29; 2 Sam. 13: 19; 15: 32; Ezra 9: 3; Job 1: 20; Jer. 36: 24.
6. With the seven washings in Jordan compare the seven compassings of Jericho, Josh. 6: 3-20, and the seven ascents of Elijah's servant to the summit of Carmel, 1 Kings 18: 43.
7. Compare the cures of leprosy in the New Testament, Matt. 8: 1-4; 10: 8; Luke 5: 12-14; 17: 11-19.
8. Read Christ's reference to Naaman, Luke 4: 27.
9. Compare the other instances of the infliction of leprosy as a punishment, Miriam, Num. 12: 1-15; Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26: 16-23.
10. Read the other references to Gehazi, 2 Kings 4: 12-31; 8: 4, 5.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the scholars to write out, at home, abstracts of chapters 3–5 of 2 Kings, confining the whole to one hundred words. Have two or three of these, chosen at haphazard, read in the class. Tell the scholars to look up other references to Gehazi.

Manual Work. — Let the scholars make simple outline maps showing the boundaries of Syria and Palestine, with the rivers mentioned in the lesson, and the route of Naaman marked in red.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — What Children Can Do. The Characteristics of Leprosy. Sin a Leprosy. Lepers of the Bible. Naaman: a Character Sketch. Gehazi: a Character Sketch. The Jordan Compared with the Abana and Pharpar. Naaman's Cure a Picture of Our Salvation.

Learn by Heart. — Vs. 13, 14; Luke 2: 30–32; Rev. 1: 5, 6.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Most scholars place this event in the reign of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, who reigned B.C. 904–894 (Beecher), B.C. 861–849 (Hastings). But Mrs. Louise Seymour Houghton, in *Hebrew Life and Thought*, p. 139, argues that this event occurred in the reign of Jehoahaz (B.C. 864–848, Beecher), and that the Syrian king was not Benhadad but his successor, Hazael.

Place. — Damascus, the capital of Syria, the oldest city in the world, famed for its swords, "Damascus blades," and for its silks, "damask." Samaria, the capital of Israel, about 110 miles distant in an air line.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Elisha, the Man of God, by Dodds. Brilliant sermons on the event in Alexander Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture*. Especially fine treatment by Farrar in *The Expositor's Bible*, Parker in *The People's Bible*, and Geikie in *Old Testament Characters*. Admirable chapters in Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible* and Whyte's *Bible Characters, Ahithophel to Nehemiah*. Chapter, "Gehazi the Grafter," in Amos R. Wells's *Bible Miniatures*. Chapter on Elisha, by H. Elvet Lewis, in *Men of the Old Testament* (Jennings and Graham). Chapters on the little Hebrew servant in *Nameless Women of the Bible*, by Rev. Theron Brown, and *Women of the Old Testament*, by Robert F. Horton, D.D. A quaint treatment in Thomas Fuller's *Joseph's Party-Colored Coat*. *Sermons* by Rev. John McNeill, the Bishop of Peterborough, Canon Liddon, Perowne, Vaughan.

Moral Leprosy, Its Cause and Its Cure, as Illustrated by Naaman and Gehazi.

Introduction. — ***What do you think to be one of the principal characteristics of Elisha's miracles?*** Their gracious helpfulness. The prophet's "life was marked by a series of miracles, some of knowledge, others of power, expressly wrought in the name of the Lord. They belong to the second group of miracles in redemptive history. They occurred at a time when the religion of Jehovah was engaged in a desperate struggle for existence against Baal worship, and, like the miracles by God for Elijah, were intended to accredit the prophet and to attest Jehovah to be the living God." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary*. The miracles of Elisha were nearly all miracles of kindly helpfulness. ***What were some of these?*** Those immediately preceding and following our lesson: healing the unhealthful waters of a spring (2 Kings 2: 19–22); bringing water into a dry valley for the aid of the three kings (2 Kings 3: 4–27); paying a poor widow's debts by increasing her oil supply (2 Kings 4: 1–7); restoring to life the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4: 8–37); making healthful some pottage into which a poisonous plant had been put (2 Kings 4: 38–41); feeding a hundred men with twenty barley cakes and a few ears of corn — this and the preceding being in time of famine (2 Kings 4: 42–44); healing Naaman, our present lesson; making a lost axe-head (iron was very valuable in those days) return to the surface of the water (2 Kings 6: 1–7). Let us bear in mind this characteristic of Elisha as we study our lesson under these heads:

I. A GREAT NEED (v. 1).

II. A GREAT DELIVERANCE (vs. 2–14).

Through Simple Agencies:

(a). A little maid (vs. 2–4).
(b). Two blundering kings (vs. 5–7).
(c). A confident prophet (vs. 8, 9).
(d). Healing water (vs. 10–14).

III. A GREAT SIN (vs. 15–27).

Elisha's honor contrasted with Gehazi's perfidy.
Ancient and modern "graft."

1. Now [1] Nā'a-man, captain of the host of the king of Syr'ĭ-a, was [2] a great man [a] with his master, and [b] honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance (victory) unto Syr'ĭ-a: he was also a mighty man in (of) valour, *but he was* a leper.

[1] Luke 4: 27.
[2] Ex. 11: 3.

a Heb., *before.*
b Or, *gracious.*

I. **A Great Need.**—V. 1. ***Who was Naaman?*** He was commander-in-chief under the king of Syria, Benhadad II. "Benhadad, who had been wont in his youth and middle age to lead his armies into the field in person, seems now in his old age to have found it necessary to entrust the command to a general."—*Pulpit Commentary.* Naaman had gained renown by freeing his country from a powerful foe, probably Assyria, for the Black Obelisk mentions wars of the Assyrians under Shalmanezer II. against Israel and Benhadad.

Why is it said that the Lord gave deliverance by Naaman, though he was an idolater? Perhaps Israel was joined with Syria in the war. In any case, the defeat of Assyria was a protection to the Hebrews. Besides, it is a "high prophetic view that it is Jehovah, not Hadad or Rimmon, who gives victory to Syria as well as Israel."—*Ellicott.*

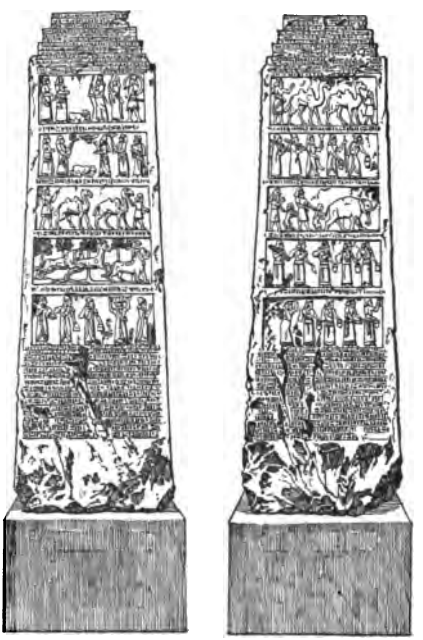
Honored and powerful, what was the flaw in Naaman's fortune? **But he was a leper.** "There is a 'but' in every fortune, as there is a 'but' in every character."—*Alexander Maclaren.* "Leprosy is of slow development, and as Naaman retained his military command, his malady cannot have reached a very advanced stage. It is not likely, in any case, that the Syrians observed the same strict rules regarding it as the Jews."—*Dummelow.* Leprosy, however, is a terrible disease, fitly used throughout the Bible as the symbol of sin and death. It makes the skin thick and lumpy, especially the face, disfiguring it greatly. Sometimes the disease eats off the fingers and toes. It makes foul sores, and sometimes the voice becomes merely a hoarse whisper.

How is leprosy like sin? The victim feels little pain, and often goes for a long time with the disease without realizing it. The disease is contagious. It is most loathsome. It is incurable, at least in the present state of our knowledge. Sin is curable, but not by man.

What is the great lesson to be learned from Naaman's leprosy? That all men are on a common level of sinfulness, great and small, rich and poor, weak and powerful, learned and unlearned. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3: 23).

ILLUSTRATIONS. Naaman was a great man, a brave man, a famous man, "*but he was a leper.*" So you may be "amiable, but an amiable sinner; refined, a refined sinner; wealthy, a wealthy sinner. The Bible will not give you a clean bill, and allow you to come into port, when you ought to be riding quarantine because there is infectious disease on board."—*Rev. John McNeill.*

"The cholera, when it lays hold of ladies and gentlemen, deals with them in precisely the same fashion that it does when it lays hold of waifs on the dunghill; and a wise doctor will treat the Prince of Wales just as he will treat the Prince of Wales's stable-boy."—*Alexander Maclaren.*



The Black Obelisk (two sides).

Representing acts of homage rendered to Shalmaneser II. by his numerous tributaries. It is a solid monument of black marble, seven feet high and two feet square at the base. Now in the British Museum.

II. **A Great Deliverance.**—Vs. 2–14. Naaman was a great man, with a great

2. And the Syr'ĭ-ans had gone out [by companies, in bands,] and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she [a] waited on Nā'a-man's wife.

3. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord [were] [b] with the prophet that [is] in Sa-mā'rĭ-a! [for he would then would he] [c] recover him of his leprosy.

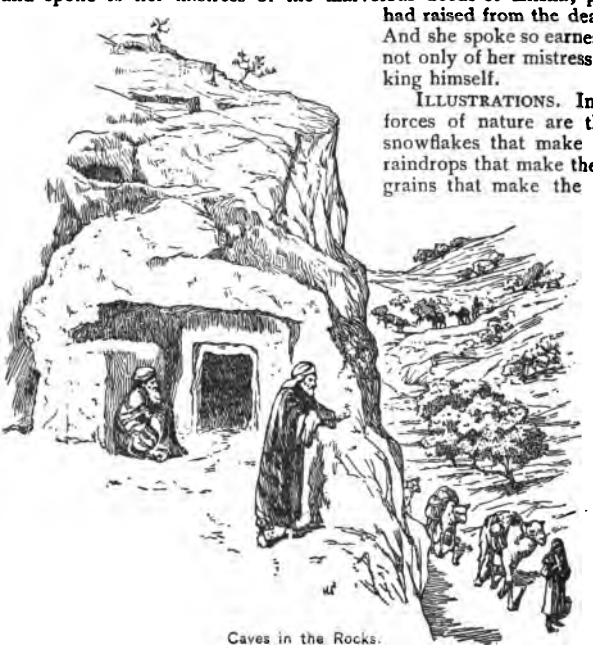
4. And [one] [one] went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that [is] of the land of Israel.

a Heb., *was before.* *b* Heb., *before.* *c* Heb., *gather in.*

need; and God prepared a great deliverance for him, as he has a great deliverance for all the great needs of his children. But it was brought about by four very simple agencies. Only inferior artists make a parade of complicated processes; the most skilful workers use few tools and unpretentious methods, and God is the most skilful of all artists.

What was the first of these agencies? **A little maid,** who had been **brought away captive out of the land of Israel** by some of the many marauding bands of the Syrians, and taken by Naaman to wait on his wife. "One has to conceive the marauding Syrian bands swooping down upon the plain of Jezreel, raiding the villages, driving off the cattle, and seizing women and children to be sold in the slave-market of Damascus. And we can understand the mingled terror and anguish of a little girl torn from her home and carried away into a land which, if not distant, was strange, and into a life which, if not positively cruel, was yet that of exile and servitude. The thoughtful little soul must have suffered constant anguish; but what is so attractive in the child is that her heart remained tender and unselfish in the midst of her sufferings. When she saw her master decaying before her eyes with that dreadful disease which is the most irremediable and the likest sin of all physical complaints, she forgot that this was the captain of the host that had warred against her country and of the bands that had carried her from home." — *Robert F. Horton, D.D.*

What did the little maid's compassion lead her to do? She overcame her timidity and spoke to her mistress of the marvelous deeds of Elisha; perhaps telling her how he had raised from the dead the Shunammite's son. And she spoke so earnestly as to win the attention not only of her mistress but of Naaman and of the king himself.



Caves in the Rocks.
A place of refuge for lepers.

ILLUSTRATIONS. In their aggregate, the small forces of nature are the mightiest, — the little snowflakes that make the avalanches, the little raindrops that make the Niagaras, the little sand-grains that make the mountains, the little sunbeams that make the harvests. Thus also there is absolutely no limit to the great things that may be accomplished by young people, if they will allow God to use them. Note the deeds of Bible young folks, such as Joseph, Samuel, Daniel, Timothy, the lad with the luncheon who made possible the feeding of the five thousand. "A little child shall lead them" was Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 11:6).

"A little Welsh girl conceived a great desire for a Bible, and walked over the hills to Mr. Charles of Bala in order

5. And the king of Syr'ĭ-a said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and [1] took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand [a] *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

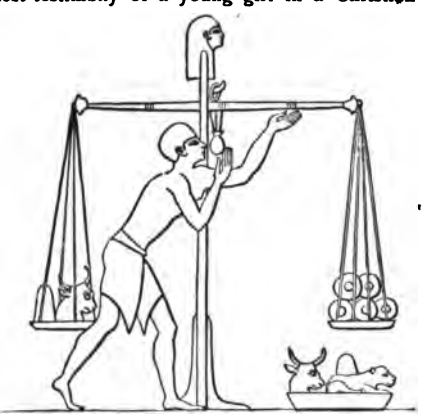
6. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now And now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have *therewith* sent Nā'a-man my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am Am I [2] God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore but consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

[1] 1 Sam. 9: 8; 2 Kings 8: 8, 9. [2] Gen. 30: 2; Deut. 32: 39; 1 Sam. 2: 6. *a* Or, *shekels*.

to procure one. And that was a little seed from which the British and Foreign Bible Society, with all its beneficent fruits in every country under heaven, has grown. Thus it was a servant in the home of the great Lord Shaftesbury who brought her young master to Christ, and launched him on one of the noblest careers of beneficence that any Englishman of this age has followed." — *Robert F. Horton, D.D.*

The great Welsh revival, the most glorious and far-reaching outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this generation, started with the earnest testimony of a young girl in a Christian Endeavor prayer meeting. All she said was, "Oh, I do so love Jesus!" and then she sat down. All Christendom is still feeling the blessed effects of the scenes that followed.



Scale, Weights and Money.

What was the second agency used in the recovery of Naaman? Two blundering kings, Benhadad and the timorous king of Israel (vs. 5–7). "Two more jealous neighbors than Syria and Israel never touched frontiers. But somehow a peaceful mission to Samaria must be managed. Benhadad would strain a point to save his favorite commander, and he wrote a letter to King Joram (Jehoram, the son of Ahab)."—*Rev. Theron Brown.* Of course, thought Benhadad, the great prophet would be at the court, and in the employ of the king. Besides the letter, Naaman took with him a large present, as befitted one who was seeking so great a boon. To come before any one without a gift when a favor was to be asked would have been inexcusable rudeness. "At this early date there was no coined money. The silver and the gold were in bars and were paid away by weight. A talent of silver is said to have been worth about £375. The shekel (gold piece) when it came to be a coin was worth about £2." — *Cambridge Bible.* Naaman's money gift, therefore, was about $78,750, besides the costly robes, the latter being still a common gift in the Orient.

How did the king of Israel receive the letter? Evidently nothing was said in it definitely about Elisha, and Jehoram, the idolater, was plainly not in the habit of consulting the prophet; though he should not have forgotten him so soon, after Elisha had saved him in the campaign against the Moabites (2 Kings 3). Jehoram's only thought was that his powerful neighbor was seeking a pretext for a quarrel and war in thus asking from him an impossible favor. "Jehoram's character was weak and unsatisfactory; he had no stability of principle, no strong religious convictions." — *Rawlinson.* With all his power, the king serves only as a foil to the courageous Elisha. "Had Jehoram rightly understood that the request was merely that he should use his knowledge and influence to effect the cure, he would have been saved all this alarm. We often fear from the misapprehension of the words and deeds of others, and from ignorance of the sources of help at hand." — *Justin E. Twitchell, D.D.*

8. And it was so, so, when E-lī'sha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore has thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

9. So Nā'a-man came with his horses and with his chariot, chariots, and stood at the door of the house of E-lī'sha.

What was the third agency used by God in the cure of Naaman? The confident prophet, such a contrast to the timid Jehoram (vs. 8, 9). Elisha was not long in hearing of Jehoram's plight, for he probably lived in Samaria, in another part of the city (v. 3; 2 Kings 6: 32a). Moreover, the king had publicly **rent his clothes** at the blasphemous request of Benhadad, requiring of him what only God could do. "The king's act was public; his complaint was public; he wished his subjects to know the outrageous conduct, as he viewed it, of the Syrian king (compare 1 Kings 20: 7, where Ahab similarly calls attention to the strait in which he is placed)."—*Pulpit Commentary.* **Let him come now to me,** says the bold Elisha, **and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.**

Photograph by Wilson.

Group of Lepers, Samaria.

Is that boasting? "Yes, but it is boasting of the right kind. When a man boasts in God, 'the humble hear thereof, and are glad.' Let us not magnify ourselves, but let us magnify our office." — *Rev. John McNeill.*

What was the final agency used by God in healing Naaman? The water of the river Jordan (vs. 10–14). Why did Elisha, when Naaman in all his pomp ("with his horses and with his chariots" — R.V.) stood at his door, merely send a messenger to the great general, and not go out himself? (1) Perhaps because "Elisha, as a strict Jew, could not approach a leper." — *Geikie.* (2) "Perhaps reverence held back those who consulted a great prophet from entering his presence (compare 2 Kings 4: 12), and therefore Naaman stopped with his followers outside the house." — *Ellicott.* (3) Perhaps, as old Thomas Fuller quaintly says, "it was the sight of Naaman's shoe which made Elisha so high in the instep: with the stately he would be stately; the rather because he did perceive that Naaman must be humbled before he could be healed, and the proud flesh first taken out of his heart ere the putrid flesh could be cured in his body." (4) Perhaps it was because Elisha "wished to efface himself completely, and to fix the leper's thoughts on the one truth that if healing was granted to him, it was due to the gift of God, not to the thaumaturgy or arts of man." — *Farrar.*

Why did Elisha bid Naaman to wash seven times in the river Jordan? To test and strengthen his faith. The journey would give him time for meditation, for the nearest point of the Jordan was "twenty-five miles in a straight line, but much farther in the distance to be travelled, from the winding of the ravines down which it must be reached." — *Geikie.* Moreover, the simplicity of the act would turn Naaman's thoughts away from outward forms to the true God. He would be sure that the water itself did not accomplish the cure, else there would be no lepers in Israel. And he would not, at the distance of twenty-five miles, be likely to ascribe the cure to the prophet.

Why was Naaman angry at this message? (1) "How was he to tell that this 'man of God' did not design to mock him by sending him on a fool's errand, so that he would come back as a laughing-stock both to the Israelites and to his own people?" — *Farrar.* (2) Naaman had expected the prophet himself to come forth respectfully, and "wave his hand over the place" (R.V.), and go through some mystic ceremony. "The sting lay in

10. And E-lī'sha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and [1] wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11. But Nā'a-man was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, [a] I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

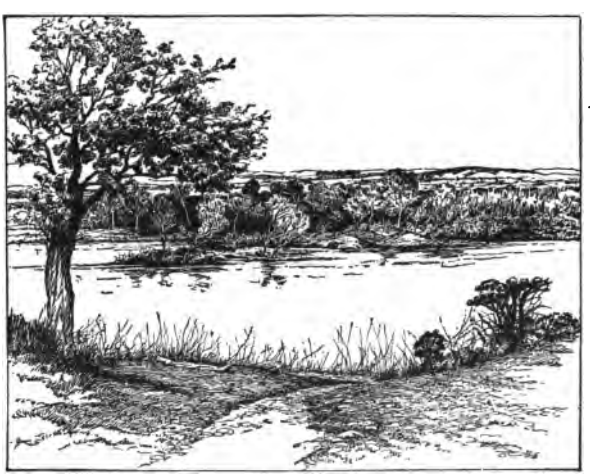
12. Are not Are not [b] Ab'a-na Ab'a-nah and Phär'par, the rivers of Da-măs'cus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if it the prophet had bid thee do some do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14. Then went he down, and dipped himself himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and [2] his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and [3] he was clean.

[1] 2 Kings 4: 41; John 9: 7.
[2] Job 33: 25.
[3] Luke 4: 27.
[a] Heb., *I said.*
[b] Or, *Amanah.*

the fact that the prophet himself took no *part* in the cure; that, instead of being proud to have so august a patient, he had calmly handed him over to one of his assistant physicians — to the medical skill of the waters of Jordan." — *George Matheson, D.D.* (3) Moreover, the command to seek the Jordan offended Naaman's patriotism. Why was he sent to the muddy, insignificant Jordan? Were not **Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?** "The Abana is no doubt the modern Barada," says George Adam Smith, "the river to which the beauteous oasis of Damascus owes its beauty and its very existence." "It flowed pure as crystal from the snowy Lebanon, through the very streets of the city, amidst wide gardens whose fame was spread through all lands." — *Geikie.* The Pharpar, now called Nähr el A'wâj, is a rapid stream, passing a little below the city. The Abana was called by the Greeks "the golden flowing." "It is the clearest water possible, and singularly bright in color; in the morning a full, deep emerald green, in the evening a sapphire blue. It was impossible not to think of the two jewels, so exactly did it resemble their clear, gem-like hues at times." — *Miss Beaufort,* in *Egyptian Sepulchres and Syrian Shrines.*



Photograph by Bonfils.
Upper Part of the River Jordan.

"Life's great things, like the Syrian lord,
Our hearts can do and dare,
But oh! we shrink from Jordan's side,
From waters which alone can save,
And murmur for Abana's banks,
And Pharpar's brighter wave." — *Whittier.*

As Naaman went away in a rage, how was he put in a more sensible frame of mind? By one of his servants; Naaman seems to have had great fortune in his servants. **My father,** said the servant with respectful affection, **if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?** "Yes! Of course he would, and the greater the better. Men will stand, as Indian fakirs do, with their arms above their heads until they stiffen there. They will perch themselves upon pillars, like Simeon Stylites, for years, till the birds build their nests in their hair; they will measure all the distance from Cape Comorin to Juggernaut's temple with their bodies along the dusty road. They will wear hair shirts and scourge themselves. They will do all these things and do them gladly, rather than listen to the humbling message that says, 'You do not need to do anything — wash!' Our cleansing is in that blood of Christ that has the power to make the foulest amongst us pure and clean." — *Alexander Maclaren.*

What was the result of Naaman's obedience? The result that always comes when men obey God's commands, he was instantly and completely cleansed from his leprosy.

> "His dry palms grew moist,
> And the blood coursed with delicious coolness through his veins,
> And on his brow the dewy softness of an infant stole."

Dr. Twitchell says, "There is scarcely a story in all Scripture of greater interest than this of Naaman, the Syrian." Why is this? Because of the dramatic contrasts it presents, its happy conclusion, and its applicability to each one of us in our most important interests.

The story of Naaman has been said to be the best illustration in the Old Testament of salvation from sin. How is this? 1. It indicates the *hideousness* of sin. Sin is like a leprosy, eating, insidious, defiling, mutilating, disfiguring. It is the disease most to be dreaded.

2. It indicates the *universality* of sin. No rank is exempt from the curse, and no condition of life.

3. It pictures *false views* regarding salvation from sin. Men seek the wrong means of salvation, as Naaman was sent to Jehoram instead of Elisha. Men entertain their own ideas of salvation, and want it accomplished in their own way, as Naaman would dictate to Elisha the method of his cure.

4. It shows the *simplicity* of the plan of salvation. "The surprise of Christian revelation is always in the direction of simplicity. Naaman had a programme, Elisha a command. Naaman had a ceremony, Elisha a revelation. Naaman required a whole sheet of paper on which to write out his elaborate scheme; Elisha rolled up his address into a military sentence, and delivered his order as a mightier soldier than Naaman." — *Joseph Parker.*

5. It does not teach that all are to be saved in the same way. When, in the same part of the country, Christ healed the ten lepers (Luke 17: 11–19), he did not bid them wash in the Jordan. "One may find peace through a verse of the Bible, another by means of a hymn, another by the spoken word of some humble servant of God." — *Rev. Albert H. Currier, D.D.*

6. It does teach, however, that for all men, with all their varied experiences, the way of salvation is the way of obedience. "It is not in man to think out a gospel, or to make a state of light by phosphorescence at his own center. Do the will and you shall know the doctrine." — *Horace Bushnell.*

7. Christ himself used this incident as an illustration of the truth that salvation is *for all mankind* (Luke 4: 27). The event was "a dawning of that missionary sentiment which was to grow to such magnificent noon." — *H. Elvet Lewis.*

8. The story also shows the *gratitude* which the saved should manifest. Naaman's return took him out of the way at least fifty miles. "At the Jordan, Naaman had accomplished a fourth part of his return journey; in three more days he would be in Damascus, in his own palace." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

9. We also see that one may be saved while entertaining very imperfect ideas regarding salvation and even regarding duty. "In one instance, Naaman over-did it; in another instance he under-did it." — *Matthew Henry.* (1) Elisha properly refused Naaman's present, "lest it should appear as if the cure were only on a footing with the mercenary charms and rites of the heathen priests, with whom Naaman was familiar at Damascus." — *Geikie.* Then "he that had spoken very slightly of the *waters* of Israel now is in another extreme, and overvalues the *earth* of Israel." — *Matthew Henry.* He asked for enough earth to make an altar at home, "just as the people of Pisa rejoiced to fill their Campo Santo with mould from the Holy Land, and just as mothers like to baptize their children in water

brought home from the Jordan." — *Farrar.* (2) Ready for outward confession of Jehovah in an altar, yet Naaman asked permission, when attending the king, to bow with him in the temple of the heathen god Rimmon; and Elisha neither assents nor forbids, but merely, with a forbearing smile, bids him the customary farewell, "Go in peace." "We may excuse Naaman, for he was a heathen only just converted, only half-enlightened; but we cannot pretend, as Christians, to make his plea ours, or to justify our conduct by his." — *The Dean of Peterborough.* At every cost we are to own Christ, and to bow in no house of Rimmon. See Henry Van Dyke's poem, "The House of Rimmon."

10. But this beautiful story will be lost unless we apply it to ourselves. "'What was your greatest discovery, Sir James?' asked an interviewer of the discoverer of chloroform. 'That I am a sinner,' answered the saintly man, 'and that Jesus Christ is my Saviour.'" — *Alexander Whyte, D.D.* May all our scholars make that discovery in studying this lesson.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains." — *Cowper.*

III. **A Great Sin.** — Vs. 15-27. It is a shame that this beautiful story must close with a recital of Naaman's perfidy. We may be sure that it would never have been inserted if the tale were not a true one. "Gehazi is the Old Testament Judas." — *Rev. George R. Leavitt.* "There may be more wicked acts recorded in Scripture than that of Gehazi, but there is scarcely one which shows so paltry a disposition." — *Farrar.* His first sin was covetousness. What a fool was his master to throw away all that wealth! His second sin, made necessary, as always, by the first, was lying. He did not dare say that Elisha had changed his mind about himself, but got up that story about the sons of the prophets. "Gehazi could act as agent and collector of funds for the 'Hebrew Education Society.'" — *Rev. DeWitt S. Clark, D.D.* "Such glib ingenuity in lying augurs long practice in the art." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.* Naaman was doubtless glad to give, and thus get rid of a part, at least, of the sense of obligation. But "Gehazi's act, as it must have presented itself to Naaman, had all the appearance of an afterthought on the part of the prophet, which would be fatal to his first and high idea of the prophet's disinterestedness." — *Canon Liddon.* Gehazi misrepresented the true religion to Naaman, and through him to the entire Syrian nation. His punishment was not too great. "Gehazi had taken Naaman's gift; he should take with it his malady. He would entail the one upon his heirs; he should entail the other." — *Leavitt.*

GEHAZI THE GRAFTER. Elisha's unworthy servant was a notable pioneer of the modern "grafter," that is, one that uses his position to get side profits that are often much larger than his legitimate salary. Such Gehazis were the officials of our national post-office department, who made their private gain from the selection of weighing machines. Such Gehazis were the contractors who caused the furnishings of the Pennsylvania State Capitol to cost millions of dollars more than they should have cost, making the State pay, for instance, $1,619.20 for a bootblack stand worth $100, and $1,472 for a $40 table.

All such money "is Achan's ingots buried under the sod in which stood his tent. It is Naboth's vineyard made abhorrent to Ahab on the day he entered it. It is the thirty pieces of silver which Judas dashed with a shriek upon the Temple floor. It is Gehazi's leprosy for which no silver talents or changes of raiment could atone." — *Farrar.* "Do not imagine that men can do whatever they please, and nothing come of it. Some actions take our whole soul with them, and leave us poor indeed." — *Joseph Parker.*

HOW TO KEEP CLEAN. "Deposit your all with Christ, and he will deposit his holy character with you." — *F. B. Meyer.*

"While in the mountains of Colorado I noticed the miners going into the mine at the beginning of their 'shifts.' Their hands and faces were clean as they could make them; but at the end of the 'shifts' it would be difficult to tell whether they were by nature black or white. And yet there was one part of the face which was just as clean as when they entered the mine: that was the ball of the eye; and that not because no impurities had touched it, for the mine was filled with such, but because there is a little tear-gland which keeps working all the time, and when the least speck touches the eye it washes it away. We are in the midst of sin and uncleanness in this world, but we may be kept clean every whit if we be only 'filled with the Spirit.'" — *J. Wilbur Chapman, D.D.*

LESSON II. — April 9.

ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS. — 2 Kings 6: 8–23.

PRINT vs. 8–17. COMMIT vs. 15–17. READ 2 Kings 6, 7.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*** — PSA. 91: 11.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read 2 Kings 6, 7. There is no parallel passage. Consider the general characteristics of Elisha shown in these chapters.

2. With Elisha's causing the axe-head to swim compare the miracles worked by Christ on comparatively slight occasions, as the providing of the tribute money, Matt. 17: 24–27; the turning of water into wine, John 2: 1–11; the blasting of the fig-tree, Matt. 21: 19.

3. With the account of the famine in Samaria (2 Kings 6: 24, ff.), compare Lev. 26: 29; Deut. 28: 53; Lam. 4: 10.

4. Compare Elisha's confidence during the siege with Jeremiah's confidence on a similar occasion, Jeremiah 32.

5. Compare the panic of the Syrians before Samaria with that of the Midianites before Gideon's noisy onset (Judges 7), that of the Syrians before Ahab's pages (1 Kings 20: 13–21), that of the Moabites in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3).

6. Notice the mention of Dothan in Gen. 37: 17.

7. With the mention of the chariots and horses round about Elisha compare 2 Kings 2: 11.

8. Make a study of what the Bible says about the angels and the work they do, Gen. 28: 12; 32: 1, 2; Psa. 34: 7; 68: 17; Dan. 7: 10; Matt. 26: 53, etc.

9. With the blindness of the Syrians compare that of the men of Sodom, Gen. 19: 11.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the scholars to read at home chapters 6 and 7, tell their stories in no more than 100 words, and in the end tell what one fact about God is shown by all three events.

Manual Work. — Have the class make a sand map, or a relief map in clay, putty, or paper pulp, showing the pass north of Dothan, and the country between Dothan and Samaria over which Elisha led the Syrians. Get the class to draw outline maps of the region traversed by the Syrian army in going from Damascus, marking the route going and coming. Have the scholars mark in their Bibles important passages referring to angels.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — The Helpfulness of Elisha. How Shut Eyes May Be Opened. One, with God, Is a Majority. Angels in the Bible. How to Treat Our Foes.

Learn by Heart. — Vs. 15–17; Psa. 34: 7; 91: 1–16.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — According to most scholars, this event occurred in the reign of Jehoram (B.C. 904–894, Beecher, 861–849, Hastings). Mrs. Houghton, however (see her *Hebrew Life and Thought*), holds that the Syrian king of this story was Hazael and the king of Israel was Jehu.

Place. — Dothan, a small town about ten miles north of Samaria, situated on a remarkable isolated hill, surrounded on three sides by hills. Traces of walls may still be seen all around the hill-top. Also Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Admirable chapters in Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture; The Expositor's Bible* (Farrar); *New Starts in Life*, by Phillips Brooks; *The Christ Dream*, by Louis Albert Banks; *Religion of the Present and of the Future*, by President Woolsey; Dean Vaughan's *Plain Words on Christian Living;* Canon Liddon's *Sermons*. Poems by Lucy Larcom, George Croly, Homer M. Dunning, John Brook Greenwood.

8. Then (Now) the king of Syr'ĭ-a warred against Israel: and (and he) took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place (shall be) my [a] camp.

9. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syr'ĭ-ans are (coming) down.

10. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of: and (and he) saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11. Therefore (And) the heart of the king of Syr'ĭ-a was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us (is) for the king of Israel?

12. And one of his servants said, None, (Nay,) my lord, O king: but E-lī'sha, the prophet that (is) in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

a Or, *encamping*.

Trust in God's Protection: Incidents That Confirm It.

Introduction. — What is the theme of the two chapters that we are to read, chapters 6 and 7? They contain accounts of three wonderful happenings, the teaching of all of them being, "Trust in God!" They are:

1. THE FLOATING AXE-HEAD (2 Kings 6: 1–7). At first thought, this miracle of making the lost axe-head swim to the surface of the water into which it had fallen may appear unworthy of a great prophet's power; but we must remember (1) that iron was far more valuable in those days than now; (2) that the axe was a borrowed one; (3) that the sons of the prophets were poor; besides (4), the miracle would have been well worth while if only to teach those theological students, and us, that

> "Not one concern of ours is small,
> If we belong to Him;
> To teach us this, the Lord of all
> Once made the iron swim." — *John Newton.*

2. ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS, our present lesson.

3. THE SAVING OF SAMARIA, BESIEGED BY THE SYRIANS (2 Kings 6: 24—7: 20). The famine in the besieged capital was so severe that the poorest food was sold at enormous prices, — an ass's head for about $40, and a fourth of the smallest measure of coarse pulse (called commonly "dove's dung") for more than $3; while women were reduced to the terrible deed of eating their own children. The king of Israel, mourning for these disasters with sackcloth next his flesh, in his frenzy of grief threatened Elisha with death. The prophet's response was a prophecy of immediate relief — a promise that was marvelously fulfilled. "The emphasis of the teaching should be placed upon the complete fulfilment of the word of God." — *William R. Campbell, D.D.* All God's promises in the Bible are carried out to the letter. "No other incident could be found in the sacred annals so appropriately to express, in the church of Gouda, the pious gratitude of the citizens of Leyden, Holland, for their deliverance from the Spanish army, as the miraculous raising of the siege of Samaria." — *Dean Stanley.*

This lesson of trust in God is needed by all of us, at all times of life. Let us consider carefully, then, —

I. ELISHA'S WONDERFUL INSIGHT (vs. 8–12).
II. EYES OPENED (vs. 13–17).
III. EYES CLOSED (vs. 18–23).
DO YOU SEE THE ANGELS?

I. Elisha's Wonderful Insight. — Vs. 8–12. ***How did Elisha show himself to be a true patriot?*** By using for his country his supernatural knowledge, as we should use for our country our lesser knowledge, and all our powers. Assyria was not at the time pressing upon Syria, so that Syria could attack her hereditary enemy to the south. But the plans of Benhadad II. were frustrated over and over. Elisha was then living in Dothan, about ten miles north of Samaria. Dothan was "a small town, of which some ruins and a well still mark the site. The caravan route from beyond Jordan passes, from the Plain of Es-

13. And he said, Go and spy / see where he is / is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is / he is in [1] Dō'than.

14. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a [a] great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15. And when the [b] servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. / with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

[1] Gen. 37: 17. *a* Heb., *heavy*. *b* Or, *minister*.

draelon, close to it. When I was at it, a line of camels was stalking on, with skins of oil and bags of wheat — much like those of the Midianites to whom the sons of Jacob sold Joseph in this very neighborhood." — *Geikie*. "From its site on so ancient a road through the country, and near the mouth of the main pass from the north into the hills of Samaria, Dothan must always have been a military position of importance." — *Encyclopædia Biblica*. Probably Benhadad's route on his predatory expeditions lay through this pass, which was narrow and easily defended. Therefore when the Syrians' coming was revealed to Elisha and told by him to King Jehoram, a comparatively small body of Israelites, posted a little north of Dothan, would effectually check their progress.

How can we apply to ourselves Elisha's advice, **"Beware that thou pass not such a place"?** By recognizing all places of special temptation, and being on our guard there. "Think of the men who cannot get past a pool-room or gambling resort to save their souls! There are certain grocery stores and hay-lofts and street corners and vacant lots that are more dangerous to boys than pest houses. There is absolutely no possible safety except in avoiding them." — *Charles Frederick Goss, D.D.*, in *Sunday School Times*.

What suspicion did Benhadad entertain? That a traitor among his officers was betraying his plans to the Israelites. Eastern courts have always been much infested by traitors. Thus the officers of Darius betrayed him, and Herod the Great suspected of treachery his own wife and sons, and murdered them. Thus Lord Sunderland, prime minister of James II. of England, and high in his favor, sought the favor of James's enemies in Holland by secretly transmitting to them important information. (See Macaulay's *History of England*, Chapter IX.) Benhadad's officers, however, were able to point with truth to Elisha, already well known in Syria through the healing of Naaman telling Benhadad that the wise Hebrew prophet reported to Jehoram the very words spoken in Benhadad's **bedchamber**, *i.e.*, in his *harem*, the innermost and strictly private portion of his palace.

War Chariot.

WISDOM, A GIFT FROM GOD. "A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience." — *O. W. Holmes*.

"Knowledge is more than equivalent to force." — *Bacon*.

"Lips never err, when wisdom keeps the door." — *Delaune*.

"All knowledge comes from God to the soul." — *Philo-Judæus*.

ILLUSTRATION. As I write, a band of armed men in Colorado has just taken possession of a great reservoir, overpowering the superintendent, and turned into their own reservoir for irrigation purposes more than a million gallons of water to which they thought themselves entitled. The great reservoir of God's knowledge and wisdom is always open to his children. They need not "take it by force," but they may draw from it freely ample supplies for all their need.

II. **Eyes Opened.** — Vs. 13–17. ***How did Benhadad plan to circumvent Elisha?*** Sending spies, and learning that the prophet was living at Dothan, he sent a large body of cavalry and chariots to capture him. "To secure such a man was vital. It would at once deprive Jehoram of one who was inspired by the gods and put him at the service of Syria, for it would be assumed that he could be bribed to help either side." — *Geikie*.

16. And he answered, Fear not: for [1] they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

17. And E-lī'sha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of [2] horses and chariots of fire round about E-lī'sha.

[1] 2 Chron. 32: 7; Rom. 8: 31. [2] 2 Kings 2: 11; Psa. 34: 7.

How was this plan foolish? "It is an odd instance of the inconsistency of godless men that it never occurs to the Syrian king that Elisha, who knew all his schemes, might know this one too, or that horses and chariots were of little use against a man who had heaven to back him." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.* "That Benhadad could thus besiege a town so near the capital shows the helplessness to which Israel had been now reduced." — *Farrar.*

Who discovered the investing troops? Elisha's servant, "Gehazi's successor, Gehazi having retired with a fortune, a wealthy white leper (2 Kings 5: 20–27), who was now making social capital by spinning yarns in regard to his former intimacy with the prophet (2 Kings 8: 4, 5)." — *Prof. W. J. Beecher*, in *The Sunday School Times.* "No situation could apparently be more hopeless. An unarmed man, with one attendant, is surrounded by the forces of a hostile king." — *Dean Vaughan.* The young man "sees the danger and he fears, but there is no sign that he wants to run away." — *Phillips Brooks.* He hastily arouses his master, shows him the astounding spectacle, and cries, "**Alas, my master! how shall we do?**" "This young man could see nothing else — the Syrian host compassing the city to capture his master, but nothing besides. Is it not a true parable for us? We talk of living by faith, not by sight. But what truth has it for us? Take the life of any one day: would it be very different if this world were all, if there were no judgment and no eternity?" — *Dean Vaughan.*

How did Elisha reassure the young man? "The true and only conqueror of reasonable fear is reasonable trust." — *Maclaren.* Elisha's words should be inscribed ineffaceably upon the heart of every Christian worker:

Fear Not!
for
They that be with us
are more than
They that be with them.

"This statement must, at first, have seemed nothing less than absurd to the servant, who compared the few Israelites shut up within the small town with the numerous Syrian host outside it." — *Canon Liddon.*

ONE, WITH GOD, IS A MAJORITY. "Earth has no impregnable fortress. For many years Quebec was believed to be impregnable; but the intrepid Wolfe, nursing the last spark of life in his enfeebled body, led his little army up the rugged walls of granite to the Heights of Abraham and accomplished its overthrow. But there is one fortress the walls of which no assaulting column can scale, and whose garrison cannot be starved out by any siege — a frank, sincere soul whose trust is in God." — *Louis Albert Banks, D.D.*

How did Elisha reinforce this encouragement? By a prayer, in response to which God opened the eyes of the young man, so that he saw a great host of horses and flaming chariots occupying the knoll on which Dothan stood, between the town and the surrounding host of invaders. "It was like a natural discovery by the aid of a powerful telescope — the discovery of a planet unseen before, but of the existence of which an astronomer is or might have been certain by calculations that could not fail him." — *Liddon.* "There were no chariots there, nor horses; but there were spiritual hosts, who showed themselves before the imagination of the young man to be more than a match for the army of besiegers." — *President Woolsey.* Fire, that most ethereal and powerful element, is throughout the Bible a symbol of God, as in the ascent of Elijah, the flaming visions of Ezekiel, and the fiery tongues of Pentecost.

ILLUSTRATIONS. Jacob's vision of the protecting host at Mahanaim (Gen. 32: 1, 2). The mysterious host heard by the Syrians as they were besieging Samaria (2 Kings 7: 6). The legions of angels that Christ said he could summon to Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 53).

"An escaped prisoner in the Civil War wandered for many days and nights, seeking the Union lines. At last, in the dusk of the early twilight, he came to a camp which he supposed belonged to the Confederates. Before he knew it he was surrounded by the pickets and captured, to be hurried back to prison as he thought. But what was his surprise and joy, on looking a little closer, to find that it was the Union blue, and not the Confederate gray, that the soldiers wore! He had been captured by his friends. When he thought that his friends were far away, they were all about him. O wanderer, and fugitive from God, lift up your eyes; the hosts of your friends surround you. God is near you. Jesus Christ is by your side. The Holy Spirit is hovering over you. The opening of your spiritual eyes will reveal it all." — *Francis E. Clark, D.D., LL.D.*

"Our eyes need to be opened to see God in nature — God in his love, and wisdom, and power. We need to have our eyes opened on providence, that in all we undertake and suffer we may see God as our Guide, and trust him. We need to have our eyes opened on the Bible. It is a moment never to be forgotten when over the meadows of the Bible, where nothing but ordinary grass appeared before, there start up suddenly the horses and chariots of fire." — *Prof. James Stalker.*

FAITH-OPENED EYES. "The world says, 'Seeing is believing'; the gospel says, 'Believing is seeing.'" — *Maclaren.*

"The true unveiling of the human eye is the sight of the divine Father standing above all our struggling human life, looking down into it with love, with pity, and ready to strike down all our enemies the moment that they grow too strong for us. We are like the bewildered soldier looking up out of the dust and smoke and blood, and seeing his captain standing calm and watchful up there where he can survey the whole field and manage the whole battle." — *Phillips Brooks.*

"If there are hosts of foes of God, there is a God of hosts above them." — *President Woolsey.*

"Palissy, the potter, labored sixteen years to perfect his invention. He had in his mind's eye all the time the beautiful vase which he should produce. Howe had before him the perfect sewing-machine while working away at his crude experiments; and Morse had, in his mind's eye, the perfect telegraph, and Stephenson the perfect locomotive, long before any one else could perceive these machines. It was the vision of the invisible which gave these men courage." — *Francis E. Clark, D.D., LL.D.*

"When Felix of Nola was flying from his enemies he took refuge in a cave, and he had scarcely entered it before a spider began to spin its web over the fissure. The pursuer, passing by, saw the spider's web, and did not look into the cave; and the saint, as he came out into safety, remarked, '*Ubi Deus est, ibi aranea murus; ubi non est, ibi murus aranea*' ('Where God is, a spider's web is as a wall; where he is not, a wall is but as a spider's web')." — *Farrar.*

III. **Eyes Closed.** — Vs. 18–23. ***How did Elisha, in the knowledge of his heavenly helpers, meet the Syrians?*** The Syriac version reads, "And when they (Elisha and his servant) came down to them (the Syrians)." Our version, the Hebrew, implies that Elisha and his servant boldly went down from Dothan into the valley, and that the leaders of the Syrians came down from the heights on which they were encamped, to parley with the prophet.

In this emergency, what did Elisha do? Once again (see v. 17) he prayed; for prayer is the recourse of all the strongest men in the time when they need to be strongest. "Prayer is a powerful thing, for God has bound and tied himself thereto." — *Luther.* He prayed that blindness might fall upon the Syrians, and at once his prayer was granted. Not literal blindness is meant, probably, for they were able to follow Elisha to Samaria, but a confusion of vision or of mind, so that they were readily deluded. Perhaps only the leaders were affected.

Did Elisha lie to the Syrians? No; he spoke the literal truth, which Professor Beecher paraphrases: "This is not the way or the city in which you will accomplish the business you have in hand." And he kept his promise in bringing them to the man whom they were seeking.

ILLUSTRATION. "The incident reminds us of the story of Athanasius, who, when he was being pursued on the Nile, took the opportunity of a bend of the river boldly to turn back his boat towards Alexandria. 'Do you know where Athanasius is?' shouted the pursuers. 'He is not far off!' answered the disguised archbishop; and the emissaries of

Constantius went on in the opposite direction from that in which he made his escape." — *Farrar.*

Why did Elisha lead the Syrians ten miles to Samaria? To show them, and also to show the Israelites, how powerless they were before Jehovah. Elisha made the pompous and confident invaders appear ridiculous, which is the most thorough defeat that can be given to any enemy.

Why did not Elisha allow the Syrians to be captured, as Jehoram wished? The prophet reminds the king that he would not kill even those whom he had taken prisoner in open warfare; still less should he kill those whom God had so mysteriously brought into his power. Besides, one reason why Elisha had led the Syrians to the capital was that they might be kindly treated, feasted, and sent back to Benhadad with coals of fire heaped upon their heads.

What was the result of this kind treatment and of the power that Elisha had shown? **The bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.** To be sure, the very next verse tells of a Syrian army besieging Samaria, but there may have been a considerable interval between the two events; some scholars think that the account we have been studying has got misplaced in the record, and really belongs after the story of the siege of Samaria. "Nineteen centuries of so-called Christianity have not brought 'Christendom' to practise Elisha's recipe for finishing a war. Pity that the same sort of treatment were not tried to-day!" — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

Photograph by Wilson.
Street of Columns, Samaria.

DO YOU SEE THE ANGELS?

What is the great teaching of our lesson for modern people? The reality of the invisible world, and its power to help and comfort. "To have no sense of the invisible is the ruin of art." It is the ruin of all life also.

ILLUSTRATION. Many will believe only what their uninstructed eyes can see. "When the comet of October, 1858, appeared, a lecturer made a tour of some country villages in Devonshire with a view to telling the country people some facts about the beautiful object; and among other points he touched upon the calculations which astronomers had made as to the enormous length of the tail of the comet. I recollect hearing a countryman who treated this part of his lecture with contemptuous incredulity. 'I saw the comet myself,' said the man, 'and its tail was *just four feet long;* and how are we to believe this man who comes down here to tell us that it is ever so many millions of miles?'" — *Canon Liddon.*

Christians should be continually upheld by the realization of their angelic helpers. "The brave man need not see any celestial form with spear and helmet by his side, yet he may know as he goes out to the battle that the spirits of justice everywhere are sympathizing with him and helping him in unknown ways. The mother may not discern an angel bending over the bed on which her child is laid, but still she may know that there are other watchers by its bed beside herself, spirits whom God has sent to see that none of his little ones take any harm. The soul in its bereavement may not look to see here again the very presence and features of the friend whom God has taken, yet still may be sure that even now, in such unknown ways as soul may present itself to soul, his friend is with him, for encouragement and strength." — *Phillips Brooks.*

"Blest were we,
When every earthly prospect is shut in,
And all our mortal helpers disappear,
If with faith's eye undimmed and open wide,
We might behold the blessed angel-troop,
Which God, our God, has promised shall encamp
Round those who fear his name. Our sickly doubts,
That flit like foul night-ravens o'er our soul,
Would hush their screams and fly before the dawn,
And we should learn to fear no evil thing." — *Lucy Larcom.*

The thought of these heavenly helpers is particularly comforting when we become conscious of those "principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world" that are continually seeking our souls. "Alongside of this world of humanity with its bustling activities is another, invisible but real, world of opposing spirits — active, determined, each struggling for supremacy, one strong in the assurance of ultimate success, the other desperate through malignity and hate. A great campaign is on foot. And the thing that gives it supreme interest is the fact that every man is in it. For him they strive; his soul is the prize they seek. Momentous truth! but, alas, how little heeded!" — *Rev. Henry S. Kelsey.*

"When Satan and his host appear,
Like him of old, I faint and fear;
Like him, by faith, with joy I see
A greater host engaged for me." — *John Newton.*

"The hosts of God encamp around
The dwellings of the just;
Deliverance he affords to all
Who on his succor trust." — *Nahum Tate.*

LESSON III. — April 16.

JOASH, THE BOY KING, CROWNED IN JUDAH.

2 Kings 11: 1–20.

PRINT vs. 9–20. COMMIT v. 12. READ 2 Kings 8–11.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.*** — PSA. 119: 2.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read 2 Kings 8–11. Read the parallel, 2 Chronicles 22, 23.

2. With Athaliah's murderous cruelty compare Nebuchadnezzar's, Jer. 39: 6, 7, Jehu's, 2 Kings 10, and Herod's, Matt. 2: 16.

3. Read the account of the chambers in the Temple, 1 Kings 6: 5–10.

4. With the preservation of Joash compare that of Moses, Ex. 2: 1–10.

5. In connection with the mention of the Carites (v. 4, R.V.) note the reference to the same body of soldiers in 2 Sam. 20: 23.

6. With Jehoiada's conference in the Temple, v. 4, compare Jeremiah's, Jer. 35: 2.

7. In illustration of the storing of the weapons that David had captured see 1 Sam. 21: 9 and 2 Sam. 8: 7.

8. With the coronation of Joash compare that of Saul, 1 Sam. 10: 1; of David, 2 Sam. 5: 3; of Solomon, 1 Kings 1: 33–35.

9. Note in a concordance the many references to the sacred law as the "testimony."

10. With Joash's covenant compare that of Moses, Ex. 24: 7, 8; Asa, 2 Chron. 15: 9–15; Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 29: 10; Josiah, 2 Chron. 34: 31.

11. With the breaking down of the Baal temple compare the reformations under Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18: 4, and Josiah, 2 Kings 23: 4–20.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the scholars to read at home the four chapters of Kings and the two of Chronicles, and offer a little reward for all the two-hundred word abstracts of the history that are handed in. Ask the class to note, in our immediate lesson, all the points in Chronicles that are not found in Kings.

Manual Work. — Show the scholars how to make two "family trees" of the houses of Omri and Jehoshaphat, bringing out the relation of the characters of our lesson to one another. The class may make ground plans of the Temple and the palace, illustrating the scenes we study.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — Evil and Good Ambition. Boys of the Bible. God's Providence as Illustrated in the Bible. Wicked Women in the Bible. The Kingdoms of Modern Youth.

Learn by Heart. — V. 12; Psalm 91; Psalm 121.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Athaliah came to the throne in 849 B.C. (Hastings) or 893 B.C. (Beecher); Joash, 843 B.C. (Hastings) or 887 B.C. (Beecher).

Place. — Jerusalem, the capital of Judah.

Kings. — Joash's contemporaries were Jehu in Israel, Hazael in Syria, Shalmanezer II. in Assyria.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Especially fine treatment in Dr. Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, *The Expositor's Bible* (Farrar), Geikie's *Old Testament Characters*, *Landmarks of Old Testament History*, and *Hours with the Bible*, Joseph Parker's *People's Bible*. Histories of the Jews by Milman, Stanley, Wade, Smith, Cornill. Rawlinson's *The Kings of Israel and Judah*. Racine's *Tragedy of Athaliah*.

The Story of a Young King. The Kingdoms of Our Modern Young People.

Introduction. — Most of the noblest rulers of history, like Washington, Lincoln, Cromwell, William of Orange, sprung out of troublous times; and Joash, whose life we are next to study, was no exception.

What was happening in the northern kingdom? Jehoram, under whose rule most of the miracles of Elisha were wrought, was the last monarch of the house of Omri, which had reigned for three generations and given four kings to Israel. Elisha caused one of the king's guard, a notable soldier named Jehu, to be anointed king. At once the bold warrior won the support of the disaffected army, slew Jehoram and his mother Jezebel and all his children, and slaughtered all the priests of Baal, though he still maintained the calf-worship at Bethel and Dan (2 Kings 9, 10). "We must give Jehu credit for a real detestation of the enervating and debasing religion which Ahab had introduced into Israel, and for a desire to resort to a more manly and better creed. We must also, perhaps, to some extent excuse the greater numbers of his murderous acts, as justified in his own view and in that of his contemporaries by the belief that he was but executing the divine commands. Still, we cannot recognize in him anything but one of those selfish and evil men whom God from time to time makes his instruments for accomplishing great and salutary changes, and whom he prospers to a certain extent, without commending or approving." — *Rawlinson.*

How did these events affect the southern kingdom? The greatest mistake of Jehoshaphat was his marrying his son, Jehoram, to Athaliah, the cruel and idolatrous daughter of the cruel and idolatrous Jezebel. This Jehoram of Judah was under the influence of his evil wife, and had a most unfortunate reign, dying at last a most wretched death (2 Kings 8: 16–24; 2 Chronicles 21). His son Ahaziah was wholly under the influence of Athaliah, the wicked queen-mother, keeping up a close connection with the evil house of Ahab. He was visiting Jehoram of Israel at the time of the revolution under Jehu, and was involved in the tragic fate of that king (2 Kings 8: 25–29; 9: 27, 28). Such were the gloomy circumstances surrounding the birth and the boyhood of young Joash, whose fortunes we are to follow. Let us see in this story of a young king a parable of the kingdoms of our modern young people, and how they may come to reign in them wisely and happily. We may study it in this outline:

I. HOW JOASH WAS PRESERVED (vs. 1–3).
The safety of our young kings.
II. HOW JOASH WAS CROWNED (vs. 4–12).
The coming of youth into its kingdom.
III. HOW JOASH'S ENEMY WAS SLAIN (vs. 13–16).
The enemies of our young kings.
IV. HOW JOASH BEGAN TO RULE (vs. 17–20).
Our young kings start out in their reigns.
THE EASTER LESSON: OUR CROWN OF LIFE.

I. How Joash Was Preserved. — Vs. 1–3. ***Who was Athaliah?*** "As the marriage of Charles I. to Henrietta Maria of France brought untold trouble to England, that of Omri's son, Ahab, to Jezebel of Tyre was disastrous in the extreme to the Hebrew race. It seemed a grand match, since it brought Israel into closest relations with the richest state of Palestine; but the introduction of Phœnician idolatry into the northern kingdom, to please the new queen, was a ruinous price to pay for material advantages." — *Geikie.* The poison was introduced into the southern kingdom through Jehoshaphat's folly in marrying

his son Jehoram to Jezebel's daughter Athaliah, a young woman of beauty and ability, but destitute of principle. She was the real governing power in the southern kingdom during the reign of her husband Jehoram and the brief reign of her son Ahaziah.

What did Athaliah do when King Ahaziah was killed by Jehu? **She arose and destroyed all the seed royal,** all of Ahaziah's children, who would be quite young and defenceless.

How could she bring herself to kill her own grandchildren? "Conditions in the Orient are such that the first lady of the land is not the wife but the mother of the king; she is the only person whom the king himself recognizes as superior to himself. The moment her grandson ascended the throne Athaliah would have been compelled to vacate this first position in the kingdom in favor of her daughter-in-law, and her proud heart could not bear this." — *Professor Cornill.*

HISTORIC PARALLELS. "Some of the most cruel and startling things in the world have been done by women. One called Laodice poisoned her six sons one by one, that she might be empress of Constantinople. Another, ironically named Irene ('Peace'), took the eyes out of her own boy, that he might be incapable of empire, and that she might reign alone." — *Joseph Parker.*

"As soon as Bayezid, A.D. 1390, was proclaimed king, he slew Yakub, his brother, who had fought for him gallantly throughout the day. Selim the Grim, in A.D. 1512, watched from an adjoining room the strangulation of his five orphan nephews, and soon after the remaining seven possible rivals were also put out of the road." — *Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie,* in *The Sunday School Times.*

In what unique position did these murders place Athaliah? "Judah must have sunk very low, and the talents of Athaliah must have been commanding, or she could never have established a precedent hitherto undreamed of by imposing on the people of David for six years the yoke of a woman, and that woman a half-Phœnician idolatress. Yet so it was! Athaliah, like her cousin Dido, felt herself strong enough to rule." — *Farrar.*

How was the wicked purpose of Athaliah frustrated? By Jehosheba ("Jehovah is an oath"), the wife (according to 2 Chron. 22: 11) of Jehoiada the high priest, and the daughter of Athaliah's dead husband Jehoram, but (as Josephus says) by another wife. She was therefore not Athaliah's own daughter, and was only the half sister of Ahaziah. Taking the babe, Joash, who was not a year old (compare vs. 3, 21), she hid him for the moment in a bedchamber — by which the Hebrew means not a sleeping apartment, which would be sure to be searched, but a room where beds and couches were stored away — great piles of the mats and cushions that serve for beds in Eastern lands. This, of course, was in the palace. "Thence, at the first favorable moment, she transferred the child and nurse to one of the chambers in the three stories of chambers which ran around the Temple, and were variously used as wardrobes or dwelling-rooms. The hiding-place was safe; for under Athaliah the Temple of Jehovah fell into neglect and disrepute, and its resident ministers would not be numerous. It would not have been difficult, in the seclusion of Eastern life, for Jehosheba to pass off the babe as her own child to all but the handful who knew the secret." — *Farrar.*

ILLUSTRATIONS. "The 'light of David' was burned down to its socket, but there it still flickered. The stem of David was cut down to the very roots; one tender shoot was all that remained. On him rested the whole hope of carrying on the lineage of David." — *Stanley.*

God always finds ways to frustrate the evil. "John Wilkes Booth did not reckon on the flag which tangled his feet when he tried to escape. He killed a Lincoln, but up started a host of others to undo his evil deed. The kingdom of God is not a pillar which can be thrown prostrate in the dust, but a cube that always falls upon a base as broad as that from which it has been dislodged. In fact, it is rather like the Irishman's stone fence, which he built three feet high and four feet wide, so that if it was tipped over it would be higher than it was before." — *Charles Frederic Goss, D.D.,* in *The Sunday School Times.*

THE SAFETY OF OUR YOUNG KINGS. How can we apply this incident to our modern boys and girls? For every one of them a kingdom is waiting, the kingdom of a noble, happy and useful manhood or womanhood. This is the real kingdom, for Joash, and for every boy and girl. Every young king and queen is surrounded by perils, as terrible as those that threatened Joash; and the only safety now is the safety that he found then, — the protection of the church and of a godly home.

"Richer than miser with perishing treasure,
Served with a service no conquest could bring,
Happy with fortune that words cannot measure,
Light-hearted I on the hearthstone can sing:
King, king, crown me the king,
Home is the kingdom and Love is the king."

9. [1]And the captains over [the] hundreds did according to all [*things*] that Je-hoi'a-da the priest commanded: and they took every man his men, [those] that were to come in on the sabbath, with [them that should] [those that were to] go out on the sabbath, and came to Je-hoi'a-da the priest.

10. And [to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that *were* the priest delivered to the captains over hundreds the spears and shields that had been king] [in the temple] David's, [which were in the house] of the LORD.

11. And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, [round about the king, from the] [*a* right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, *along* by the] [from the right side of the house] [to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king] altar and the temple.
[round about.]

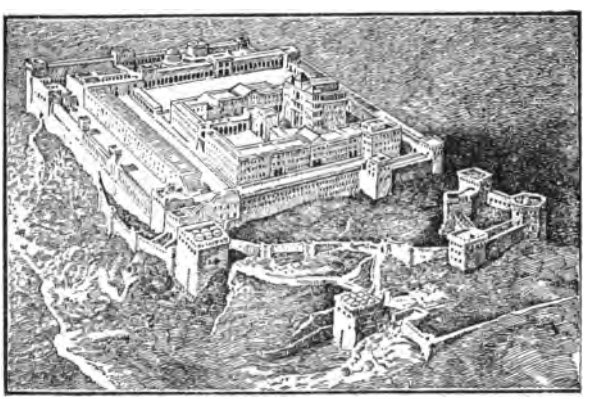
12. [And] [Then] he brought [forth] [out] the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and *gave him* the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, [*b*2]God save the king.

[1] 2 Chron. 23: 8.
[2] 1 Sam. 10: 24.

a Heb., *right shoulder.*
b Heb., *Let the king live.*

Every Christian home, every Sunday school, every Christian Endeavor society, every church, is like that quiet, safe chamber in the Temple in which young Joash was preserved from harm through those six years. There is no safety for a nation except as its youth are safe, and so these are the most important portions of our national life.

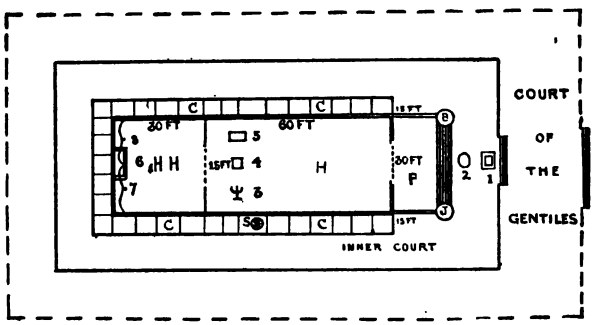
II. **How Joash Was Crowned.** — Vs. 4–12. A noble woman has done her part in saving the young king — the part that mothers play in the preservation of the young kings of our modern homes. Now a man steps in, as the father comes to have the chief influence over the life of the growing boy. ***Who was this man?*** Jehoiada, the high priest. "He had held his great position under Jehoshaphat, and was already old."— *Geikie.* Jehoiada was a man of ability and fine character. "He manifested much decision and forecast on this occasion; and he used for good the great power which devolved upon him during the minority of the young king, and the influence which he continued to enjoy as long as he lived. The value of this influence is shown by the misconduct and the disorders of the kingdom after his death. He died at the age of 130, and his remains were honored with a place in the sepulchre of the kings at Jerusalem." — *Joseph Parker.*



Solomon's Temple.
From a Model (restored after Baurat Schick in Jerusalem).

What steps did he take in the interest of the young king? Probably it was becoming increasingly difficult to hide the growing lad, and longer confinement would be most injurious for him physically and mentally. The first step toward placing him on his rightful throne was to gather a sufficient force of loyal adherents. For this purpose, doubtless after many private conversations, he brought together in one of the quiet chambers surrounding the Temple the centurions of the two classes of soldiers on duty in the palace and the temple, the Carites or executioners (v. 4, R.V.), and the guard, or runners, couriers. The first "were probably foreign mercenaries from Caria in Asia Minor (they are mentioned by Herodotus as employed by the Egyptian king Psammetichus), who formed the bodyguard of the Judæan sovereigns." — *Dummelow.* They were frequently used to perform the summary executions ordered by Eastern despots. After obtaining the assurances

of their co-operation, and firing their loyalty by actually showing the true possessor of the throne, Jehoiada, as we are told in 2 Chron. 23: 2, employed them first in bringing together in Jerusalem the Levites and heads of families from all parts of the kingdom. They came "in all probability on one of the great annual feasts, when their presence would not excite suspicion." — *Geikie.* "Anybody who remembers how the Austrians in Italy were shunned, will understand how Athaliah heard nothing of the plot that was rapidly developing a stone's throw from her isolated throne. Strange delusion, to covet such a seat, yet no stranger than many another mistaking of serpents for fish, into which we fall!" — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.* "The conspiracy was organized with consummate skill: the Levites from all quarters were brought into Jerusalem, and now for the first time the priesthood, with the high priest at their head, take the lead as guardians of the monarchy, as well as the representatives of the religion — that religion now threatened with absolute extirpation, with a rival high priest of Baal confronting them with equal pomp and power in the holy city itself. The Temple of God had been plundered, its sacred treasures given to the priests of Baalim."— *Milman.* "To feel that the city of David, and what was left of his kingdom, were being lowered to a mere Tyrian province, roused general indignation."— *Geikie.*



Plan of Solomon's Temple.

P. Porch.
H. Holy Place.
HH. Holy of Holies.
B, J. The Pillars, Boaz and Jachin.
CCCC. Chambers.
S. Spiral Staircase.
1. Altar of Burnt Offerings.
2. The Brazen Sea.
3. Golden Candlestick.
4. Altar of Incense.
5. Table of Shewbread.
6. Ark of the Covenant.
7, 8. Cherubim.

For what day was the revolution planned? For the Sabbath, "the first Sabbath of which any detailed account is preserved to us in the sacred records." — *Stanley.* The Sabbath was chosen because on that day the Temple would always have the largest crowd, and greater numbers than usual might come without exciting suspicion. Besides, there was another reason. "The Temple was in a separate court immediately adjoining the royal residence and was a part of the same group of buildings with it. The royal body-guard was organized in three divisions, an arrangement as old as the time of David. The standing order was that on week days two companies should be on duty at the palace and one in the Temple, but that on the Sabbath, when the Temple was most frequented, the proportion should be reversed. Moreover, on that day the posts were shifted; the company that had been on duty at the Temple then took its station at the palace. Jehoiada arranged that, on the particular Sabbath which he fixed upon, the soldiers already in the Temple should be detained beyond the usual hour. The consequence was that, on the arrival of the other two companies from the palace, the whole band was united at the Temple, and the palace was left wholly without a guard." — *Prof. H. P. Smith, D.D.*

How were these forces disposed? The precise arrangement is not clear, but it seems probable that vs. 6, 7 are to be interpreted by assigning two-thirds of the forces to the task of guarding the young king in the Temple, killing all that might try to force their way in to him through their "ranges" (ranks); while the remaining third is divided into three bands and posted at various strategic points outside the Temple, namely, (1) at the palace doorway (v. 5), to keep any one but Athaliah from going forth, (2) at the Temple gate of Sur (called in 2 Chron. 23: 5 "the gate of the foundation"), the position of which is unknown, and (3) at the gate behind the guard, so called "doubtless from its being the usual halting-place of the guards." — *Stanley.* Within the Temple court the troops seem to have been arranged (v. 11) in long transverse ranks running from north to south, and facing a clear space around the altar, where the young king was to stand.

How were they armed? In addition to their own weapons, which of course they would bear, "they were furnished by Jehoiada (v. 10) with the spears and shields that, as relics of David's time, hung somewhere within the sacred precincts, just as his predecessor

13. [1] And when Ath-a-li'ah heard the noise of the guard *and* [of] of the people, she came to the people into the [temple] house of the LORD;

[1] 2 Chron. 23: 12.

Abimelech had furnished to David himself the sword of Goliath." — *Stanley*. These would "remind them that it was for David's heir they were contending." — *Geikie*.

What were the ceremonies of coronation? Into the space left vacant in the Temple "the young prince was led by the high priest, and placed beside the *Matstsebah* (v. 14) — some prominent pillar in the Temple court, either one of Solomon's pillars, Jachin and Boaz, or some special erection of later days." — *Farrar*. "What a scene that would be — the seven-year-old child there among all these strange men, the joyful surprise flashing in their eyes, the exulta- tion of the faith- ful women that had watched him so lovingly, the stern facing of the dangers ahead." — *Alex- ander Maclaren*. First the crown, probably a gold band studded with jewels, was placed upon his head. Then the testimony, the roll of the law of Moses, was laid for a mo- ment lightly upon the crown. "It seems like the intimation of a limitation in the king's despotic power — an indication that he was to be not, like David, above, but be- neath the law of his country." — *Stanley*. Finally, he was anointed.

Headdress of King and Queen, Assyrian.

How did the multitude receive the event? They clapped their hands, over and over, as Orientals do, and shouted, **God save the king** (literally, "Let the king live"). "Choirs of Levites chanted a coronation psalm; the Temple musicians accompanied their voices; the silver trumpets ever and anon pealed forth loud flourishes, and the multitudes in the courts and outside were wildly shouting for the newly consecrated king." — *Geikie*.

THE COMING OF YOUTH INTO ITS KINGDOM. What is the coronation time of our modern young kings and queens? Really, like David and Saul, they have more than one coronation. Such coronations are their successive graduations from grammar school, high school, and college, entering each time a wider kingdom of knowledge. Such a coronation is their entrance into business life, a great realm of useful and profitable activity. Another coronation is their marriage, and entering upon the happy kingdom of their home. The most blessed coronation of all is their joining the church, their entrance into the kingdom of God.

ILLUSTRATIONS. Youth enters its kingdom with fine courage. When Quebec was to be taken the British War Office called in its generals one by one, and asked them what they thought of the project. The oldest said it was impossible. The middle-aged said it was so difficult as to be nearly impossible. All declined the task until they came to Wolfe, the youngest general of all. He said, "I will do it, or die in the attempt," and he did both.

> "We stand at the portals of pastures untrod,
> Untried, but true-hearted, and trusting in God, —
> Triumphant in courage and faith that his hand
> Will guide and protect us in ways he has planned."
> — *Charles Knowles Bolton*, in "*Leaving College*."

"Old age has the foundation of its joy or its sorrow laid in youth. You are building at twenty. Are you building for seventy? Nay, every stone laid in the foundation takes hold of every stone in the wall up to the very eaves of the building; and every deed, right or wrong, that transpires in youth reaches forward, and has a relation to all the after-part of man's life." — *Henry Ward Beecher*.

III. **How Joash's Enemy Was Slain.** — Vs. 13–16. ***In the meantime, what was Athaliah doing?*** As soon as she heard the tumult or the news of the revolution reached her, she went in person to the Temple, displaying all the courage of her mother Jezebel. "She probably mounted the ascent which Solomon had made from the palace to the Temple

14. And when and she looked, and, behold, the king stood by [1] a the pillar, as the manner was, was, and the princes captains and the trumpeters trumpets by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Then Ath-a-lī'ah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, Treason. treason.

15. But And Je-hoi'a-da the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds the officers of that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: between the ranks; and him that followeth her kill slay with the sword: For for the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

16. And they laid hands on So they made way for her; and she went by the way by the which the horses of the horses' entry to came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

17. [2] And Je-hoi'a-da made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; [3] between the king also and the people.

[1] 2 Kings 23: 3; 2 Chron. 34: 31. [2] 2 Chron. 23: 16. [3] 2 Sam. 5: 3.

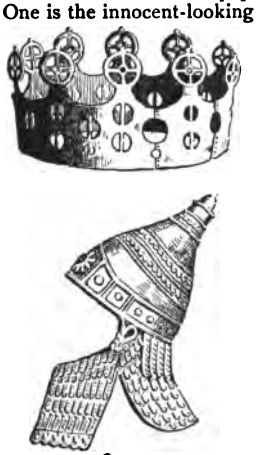
court, though it had long been robbed of its precious metals and scented woods."— *Farrar.* A glance at the joyful scene was enough to show the shrewd woman precisely what had happened.

What appeal did Athaliah make? She rent her clothes, in token of horror, and cried, "**Treason, Treason.**" But the cry brought no one to her side, and Jehoiada's only response was to command that she be taken out of the Temple between the ranks of soldiers, and that any one was to be killed that followed or tried to rescue her. His only anxiety was not to stain the Temple with the blood of the wretched woman. "Proudly as ever, she passed down the ranks, and not a face looked pity on her, nor a voice blessed her. She was reaping what she had sown." — *Maclaren.*

THE LESSON. "If you are treating any of your family, your wife or husband or child, with base cruelty, it will surely come home to you some other day. If you are kind, gentle, true, honest, the wheel will turn in your favor." — *Joseph Parker.*

Where was Athaliah slain? By the gate of the palace grounds through which the royal chariots entered, the gate through which she had often passed in all her beauty and pride. There "Athaliah disappears from history, and with her the dark race of Jezebel. But her story lives in the music of Handel and the verse of Racine." — *Farrar.*

THE ENEMIES OF OUR YOUNG KINGS. The young are like ships newly launched, for which the storms are waiting, and the savage rocks, and the icebergs, and the fog. Foes are awaiting them on all sides, enemies as deadly and as close at hand as Athaliah was to Joash. One of these is the saloon, lurking at every corner. One is the gaming-table. One is the evil book or paper or picture, or the vile story whispered by a school companion. One is the innocent-looking cigarette, with disease and death in its little white wrapper.



Crowns.

The derelicts, or floating wrecks of abandoned vessels, constitute one of the deadliest perils of the navigator, because they cannot be charted. They have sent so many fine ships to the bottom that now our government keeps a powerful boat whose sole duty is to range the seas in search of derelicts, and blow them up when they are discovered. This derelict-destroyer is like the church, which, in its rescue missions and temperance work and evangelistic campaigns, is all the time seeking to remove from the seas of life these perils to our youth.

But a ship's chief safety is its captain, and every ship that ventures out on life's sea may have on board a Captain who never makes a mistake, who knows all the unseen dangers, who can say to every storm, "Peace, be still!" and who can conduct the ship to its desired haven. Have all your scholars taken this Captain on board?

"Across this troubled tide of life
Thyself our pilot be,
Until we reach that better land,
The land that knows no sea."
— *E. A. Dayman.*

IV. **How Joash Began to Rule.** — Vs. 17–20. Three wise steps were taken, under the leadership of Jehoiada, in the opening of the young king's reign. ***What was the first***

18. And all the people of the land went into the [1] house of Bā'al, and brake it down; his altars and his images [2] brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Măt'tan the priest of Bā'al before the altars. And [3] the priest appointed [a] officers over the house of the LORD.

19. And he took the rulers of hundreds, and the captains, and the Ca'rites, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

20. And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet: and they slew Ath-a-lī'ah with the sword beside the king's house.

[1] 2 Kings 10: 26. [2] Deut. 12: 3; 2 Chron. 23: 17. [3] 2 Chron. 23: 18. *a* Heb., *offices*.

step? A covenant (literally, *the* covenant) was made between the Lord and the king and the people. This was a renewal of the original compact, in which Jehovah and his people bound themselves together — a compact broken by the Baal-worship of Athaliah's reign.

What was the second step? The immediate and thorough destruction of the temple of Baal, with its altars and licentious images, and the execution of its high priest Mattan. "It seems to be implied that the 'house of Baal' stood on the Temple mount, in ostentatious rivalry with the sanctuary of Jehovah." — *Ellicott.*

And the third step? Jehoiada appointed officers over the house of the Lord, "re-establishing the courses of the Levites, and proceeding at once to assign the custody of the Temple to a particular course." — *Speaker's Commentary.*

And the final step? Leaving the Levites to keep order in the Temple, Jehoiada and the soldiers conducted the boy king to the palace through the gate of the guard, "doubtless that through which the king regularly passed from the Temple to the palace and back again, accompanied by his bodyguard (see 1 Kings 14: 28)." — *New Century Bible.* What a change for the lad who had been a prisoner so long!

OUR YOUNG KINGS START OUT IN THEIR REIGNS. ***What will help your scholars most to make a good start in the reigns which they are so soon to begin?*** When young Solomon started out in his reign he was offered his choice of blessings, and chose not long life or riches or power, but wisdom; and in that choice he gained the other blessings also. When Christ started out in his great reign he was found in the Temple, seeking wisdom. When the girl Victoria learned that she was to become queen of earth's mightiest empire she quietly said, "I will be good." If our young kings and queens would be well furnished for their sovereignty they must go to the Bible and to the Bible school, and there they will learn what true royalty is, and what are the secrets of power and success.

THE EASTER LESSON: OUR CROWN OF LIFE.

It is appropriate that we have for Easter Sunday the story of a coronation, for Easter is the anniversary of the greatest of all coronations, the day when all mankind received the possibility, at least, of the crown of life.

This is the crown to which all our young kings and queens should look forward as the blessed reward of noble reigning over the kingdoms that God has given them. St. James wrote: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him." (Jas. 1: 12.) And St. John was bidden to write to the church in Smyrna: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (Rev. 2: 10.)

ILLUSTRATION. "It was while standing on the poop of his vessel, amid the heat and the fire of severe combat, that Nelson received his mortal wound; and, on being afterwards assured that the day was in favor of his country's flag, he breathed out his spirit with the words on his lips, 'Thank God! I have done my duty!' It is to him that is faithful unto death that there is held out the crown of glory." — *Ferguson.*

This crown of life means the achievement of the best and most beautiful character. It means the development of all the powers that God has given us. It means love and friends in most satisfying abundance. It means the honor of all whose good opinion is worth the most. It means Christ's "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" It means an eternity of happiness in heaven. All these are signified to mankind by that open grave in Jerusalem, which is the promise and proof of our immortality.

"Then welcome toil, and care, and pain!
And welcome sorrow too!
All toil is rest, all grief is gain,
With such a prize in view." — *Horatius Bonar.*

LESSON IV. — April 23.

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE. — 2 Kings 11: 21—12: 16.

PRINT 12: 4–15. COMMIT v. 11. READ chapters 12 and 17.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly.* — 1 CHRON. 29: 9.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read 2 Kings 12 and the parallel passage, 2 Chronicles 24.
2. See the notices of worship at the high places in 1 Kings 15: 14; 22: 43; 2 Kings 14: 4; 15: 4, 35; 18: 4; 21: 3.
3. For the half-shekel of the census see Ex. 30: 13; for the payment of vows see Lev. 27: 2–8; for the freewill offerings see Lev. 22: 18–23; Deut. 16: 10.
4. Compare with our lesson the similar proceedings in the time of Josiah, 2 Kings 22: 3–7.
5. Compare the offerings made for the building of the tabernacle, Ex. 35: 4–29. See also Ezra 2: 68, 69.
6. Study what the Bible has to say about giving, Ex. 22: 29, 30; 25: 2; Lev. 19: 5; Deut. 16: 17; Ezra 1: 4; Prov. 3: 9, 10; 11: 24, 25; 13: 7; 21: 26; 22: 9; Eccl. 11: 1, 2; Isa. 32: 8; Mal. 3: 10–12; Luke 6: 38; 16: 9; Acts 20: 35; Rom. 12: 8; 1 Cor. 16: 2; 2 Cor. 8: 9, 12; 9: 6–12; Eph. 4: 28; 1 Tim. 6: 18, 19; Heb. 13: 16.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Have the scholars compare the accounts in Kings and Chronicles and mark the portions in the second that are not found in the first. Ask each scholar in his home study to discover one application to modern young people, write it out, and read it in the class.

Manual Work. — Conduct a Bible-marking, having the scholars print a G in the margins of their Bibles opposite the principal texts concerning giving. See Inductive Study 6. The scholars may make from pasteboard and wood imitation ancient coins, gilding some and silvering others, using aluminum paint for the latter.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — Why Joash Loved the Temple. The Best Way to Give. Bible Illustrations of Giving. Why Joash Is to Be Imitated. Why Joash Fell. What Kinds of Church Work May We Be Doing?

Learn by Heart. — V. 11; Mal. 3: 10; 2 Cor. 9: 6, 7.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — In the twenty-third year of Joash's reign, 864 B.C. (Beecher), 821 B.C. (Hastings). Joash was slain in the fortieth year of his reign, 847 B.C. (Beecher), 803 B.C. (Hastings).

Place. — Jerusalem, and the Temple.

Kings. — Hazael is king of Syria; Jehoahaz has succeeded Jehu in Israel; in Assyria Shalmanezer II. has died and Shamash-ramman has come to the throne.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

"Honoring God's House," in *Studies of the Old Testament* by Austin Phelps, D.D., is a fine commentary on our lesson. Most helpful treatment in Rawlinson's *Kings of Israel and Judah*, *Sermons by the Monday Club*, histories by Stanley, Cornill, and Smith, Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*, Maclaren's *Expositions*, *Expositor's Bible*, *Speaker's Commentary*, and Dummelow's *One-Volume Bible Commentary*.

How We Should Care for the Church, as Illustrated by Joash's Care for the Temple.

Introduction. — "The Temple of Solomon was the original ideal of a house of God, realized in architecture unrivaled in that age. A whole nation poured out its treasures in the building. The wisest of monarchs taxed the skill of the most ingenious artificers, and the genius of the most accomplished architects of the times. It was the Jewish St. Peter's. Ophir sent its pure gold, and Lebanon its magnificent cedars. Jerusalem

and Tyre united their navies as transport ships. 'The house of God' must be made 'exceeding magnifical, of fame and glory throughout all countries.' So hallowed was the place, and so sacred the work, that it must proceed in hushed stillness. Because God was to dwell there, 'neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron' must be 'heard in the house while it was in building.' It must grow in silence, as forests grow.

"'No workman's steel nor ponderous axes rung:
Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.'

"When finished it was one of the wonders of the world. The reporters of the age could not tell the half of it. Sheba's queen was abashed as she approached it, and 'there was no more spirit in her.'" — *Prof. Austin Phelps.*

In Joash's day, care for the church meant very largely care for this great building. In the childhood of the world God dealt with men chiefly by means of symbols, and the Temple was his chief symbol of religion. The Hebrew prophets did much to lead their people out into a larger conception of religion, and the destruction of the Temple and cessation of its elaborate ceremonies during the exile still further taught the Jews to seek Jehovah everywhere; but it was Christ who taught the world most clearly the true meaning of the church: that he was greater than any Temple, and that the kingdom of God is within men. "Your body," said his chief apostle, "is the temple of the Holy Ghost." Wherever two or three are met together in Christ's name, he is in the midst. Every Christian is to be a priest of this new temple, and every common act is to be a sacrifice.

Wailing Place of the Jews, Outer Wall of Solomon's Temple.

Thus we have come to see that this caring for the church which was the glory of Joash may become the glory also of every child to-day. Each scholar in your class is caring for the church as he prepares his Sunday-school lesson, or adds a bouquet of flowers to the pulpit decorations, or is faithful in the duties of his Christian Endeavor society. And so this lesson that we are to study has a practical meaning for each of us: it will help us to see how Joash, the pioneer, did this work of ours, this caring for the church. The outline is:

I. GOOD INTENTIONS (vs. 1–6).
Why our church work falls behind.

II. VIGOROUS MEASURES (vs. 7–9).
Secrets of strong church life. Some methods.

III. FAITHFUL LABORERS (vs. 10–16).
Tests of fidelity: money, time, zeal, speech, etc.
Misfortune for the Temple: why?
The sad end of Joash.

AN AMBITION FOR CHURCH WORK.

I. **Good Intentions.** — Vs. 1–6. ***What was the attitude of Joash toward religion?*** **He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord** while Jehoiada the high priest **was alive**, but after the death of that good man (2 Chron. 24: 17–19) Joash allowed the

4. And Je-hō'ash said to the priests, [1] All the money of the dedicated hallowed things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even [2] the money of every one in current money, the money that passeth *the account*, the [a] money that every man is set at, *and* of the persons for whom each man is rated, and all the money that it [b] [3] cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD,

5. Let let the priests take it it to them, every man of from his acquaintance: and let them they shall repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

6. But it was so, that so, that [c] in the three and twentieth year of king Je-hō'ash [4] the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.

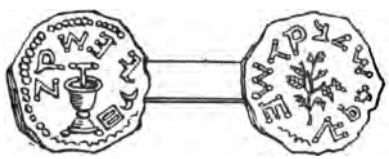
[1] 2 Kings 22: 4.
[2] Ex. 30: 13.
[3] Ex. 35: 5; 1 Chron. 29: 9.
[4] 2 Chron. 24: 5.

[a] Heb., *the money of the souls of his estimation*, Lev. 27: 2.
[b] Heb., *ascendeth upon the heart of a man.*
[c] Heb., *in the twentieth year and third year.*

people to become idolaters again. Even during Jehoiada's life, moreover, the worship at the high places was allowed to go on. "These local sanctuaries were held to be conducive to true religion." — *Farrar.*

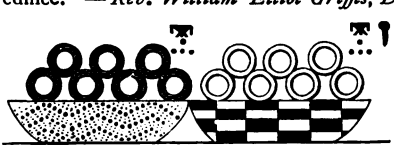
Why was it natural that Joash should be "minded to repair the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. 24: 4)? The Temple was his boyhood home, his safe refuge for seven years from the murderous cruelty of Athaliah. In the Temple lived his best friends. There he had been crowned. No wonder he came to love those courts, and to sorrow over their dilapidated condition.

Why did the move come from Joash and not from the high priest Jehoiada? Joash the king may have been spurred on by hearing of the reforms accomplished by the rival king Jehu in the north. Jehoiada may have become so accustomed to the ruin of the Temple that he did not realize its condition. "This is one of the encouragements which should inspire all teachers and parents. Our children and pupils, if we train them faithfully, may be expected to be wiser and better than we are." — *Rev. George R. Leavitt, D.D.*



Half-Shekel.

Why did the Temple need repairs? It had become "a quarry for the rival sanctuary. The stones and the sacred vessels were employed to build or to adorn the temple of Baal, which rose, as it would seem, even within the Temple precincts, with its circle of statues and its sacred altars."— *Stanley.* Moreover, "the sovereigns had made free use of its gold and silver as if these were their own. Arab and Egyptian had plundered the sacred edifice." — *Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.* Look at the condition of the churches in any town, and you can form a fair idea of the state of religion there. The house of God should be the best building in any community, and the best cared for. "Is it a time," asked Haggai indignantly, after the exile, "for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste?" and that question might well be asked in many a modern village, where the homes of the church-members are comfortably and even elegantly furnished, the roof tight, the outside well painted, while the church is shabby, its roof leaking, its cushions ragged and its carpet in shreds.



Gold and Silver Rings Used as Money.

What directions did Joash (Jehoash) give for raising money for these needed repairs? He called together the priests and the Levites (2 Chron. 24: 5), and bade them draw from the regular funds for the Temple restoration. This **money of the dedicated things**, *i.e.*, the money consecrated to religious uses by the people, was obtained from three sources: (1) **Money of every one that passeth the account**; that is, the poll-tax of a half-shekel paid by every male Hebrew above the age of twenty whenever a census was taken (Ex. 30: 13). This was to be paid in "current money" (R.V.), in such form as to be available at once; but this does not mean coins, for coined money was unknown to the Jews at this time, all their money being gold or silver rings or ingots, which were weighed as they were paid out. (2) **Money that every man is set at.** "All the assessments

7. [1] Then king Je-hō'ash called for Je-hoi'a-da the priest, and (for) the *other* priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore (receive / take) no *more* money (of / from) your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

[1] 2 Chron. 24: 6.

for various fines and vows." — *Farrar.* Such money as was paid in accordance with Lev. 27: 2–8 and Num. 18: 15, 16, for vows, and for the redemption of the first-born. (3) **Money that cometh into any man's heart to bring.** The free-will offerings of the people for this purpose, which might be large.

How was this money to be collected? The priests and Levites were to go out into the cities of Judah (2 Chron. 24: 5), and gather it **every man of his acquaintance.** "Each priest was to present the case to his personal friends. There could be no better plan. This is the simple Scriptural method by which religion is extended. Every Christian is to go among his friends and acquaintances and enlist them one by one. Undertaken in a thorough and devoted manner, this plan never fails of success. Incredible sums of money are raised with extraordinary ease; powerful and extensive revivals are promoted." — *Rev. George R. Leavitt, D.D.*

What was the success of this plan? Money for the repairs was to be taken from the regular income of the priests, which was probably no more than enough for their needs. "Vested interests had been affected by the arrangement; work outside their sphere had been laid on the priests; the people had no satisfactory proof that the money given was laid out as they wished, and contributions fell off." — *Geikie.*

How long did this unsatisfactory state of things last? We are not told just when Joash gave his orders, but probably early in his reign, and **in the three and twentieth year** of his reign **the priests had not repaired the breaches** (Hebrew, *bedek*, any kind of wear or defacement) **of the house.** Joash had certainly been sufficiently patient.

WHY OUR CHURCH WORK FALLS BEHIND. 1. There is no one, like Joash, to take thought for it. "When I am a big girl," asked a little four-year-old, "shall I be a *remember* of the church?" Many church-members are not church-rememberers.

2. The church workers, even when they do take thought for the church, have little heart in their work. "The facetious Sydney Smith had two yokes of oxen on his little farm in Yorkshire to which he gave the names of 'Tug' and 'Lug,' 'Haul' and 'Crawl.' These would be appropriate names for a large class of church-members who put no heart into their Christian work. It is mere tug and toil and task to them."—*Theodore L. Cuyler.*

3. There is a lack of co-operation. "A minister called upon a member who had been neglecting the week-night service, and went straight up to the fireplace in the sitting-room, and with the tongs removed a live coal from off the fire, and placed it on the hearth, then watched it while it turned from the red glow of heat to a black mass. The member in question carefully observed the proceeding, and then said, 'You need not say a single word, sir; *I'll be there on Wednesday night.*'"—*The Christian.* No church fire can burn brightly if the coals are pulled apart.

4. Though many other reasons might be given for the failure when church work falls behind, it is all summed up in one cause, the absence of Christ. "Getting Christ into the people will solve the problem of getting people into the church," and getting them to work when they are there. Said Napoleon, in exile in St. Helena: "My armies have forgotten me even while living, even as the Carthaginian army forgot Hannibal. Such is *our* power. A single battle lost crushes us, and adversity scatters our friends. The progress of the faith and the government of the church are a perpetual miracle. Nations pass away, thrones crumble, but the church remains." That is because Christ remains, the living, glorious cause of all the church's triumphs.

"One holy church of God appears
Through every age and race,
Unwasted by the lapse of years,
Unchanged by changing place.

"O living church! thine errand speed,
Fulfil thy task sublime;
With bread of life earth's hunger feed,
Redeem the evil time!"
— *Samuel Longfellow.*

II. Vigorous Measures. — Vs. 7–9. ***How did Joash take the priests to task?*** With the frankness and openness with which all church matters should be treated, he sent for Jehoiada and the subordinate priests and asked them, with some indignation, **Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?** "The matter is passed over by the king as

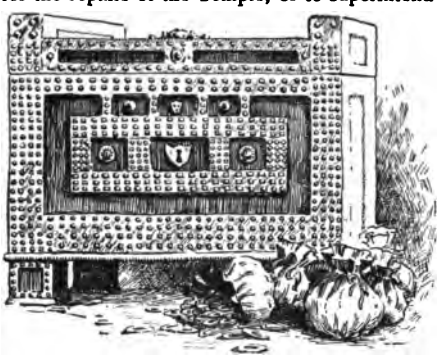
8. And the priests consented (to receive that they should take) no *more* money (of from) the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

9. But Je-hoi'a-da the priest took [1] a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the [a] door put therein all the money (that was that was) brought into the house of the LORD.

[1] 2 Chron. 24 : 8. [a] Heb., *threshold.*

lightly, courteously, and considerately as he can; but if he does not charge the priests with downright embezzlement, he does reproach them with most reprehensible neglect." — *Farrar.* However, "there was no 'rupture,' open or secret, between the monarch and the sacerdotal order, so long as Jehoiada was alive." — *Rawlinson.*

What new arrangement did Joash make? The priests were no more to solicit money for the repairs of the Temple, or to superintend those repairs. They had had their chance, and a full one. Instead, a very simple plan was adopted, appealing directly to the religious zeal of the people. A wooden chest was taken, and a slit was made in the lid for the money to pass through. This was set **beside the altar,** *i.e.*, "the altar of burnt offering, outside the Temple building: compare 2 Chron. 24: 8. **The door** would be the entrance into the Temple court."— *Dummelow.* "The arrangement 'saved the faces' of the priests to some extent, for the gifts were handed to them, and by them put into the chest. But, of course, that was done at once, in the donor's presence. If changes involving loss of position are to work smoothly, it is wise to let the deposed officials down as easily as may be." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.* "The plan was a very poor one, one of the very poorest which man has ever devised, this of a box at the church door." — *Leavitt.* But a very poor plan that is worked is better than the wisest plan that is not worked.



Money and Money Chest.

SOME SECRETS OF STRONG CHURCH LIFE. 1. *Church finances.* "In the ordinance of Moses that the payment be half a shekel — the rich to pay no more, and the poor no less — we find the true basis of general benevolence. In the law of the tithe, the principle of systematic giving is further developed. In the law republished by Joash, and carried on by the later Jews, we have the logical evolution of the same principle. The Lord's blessing on the widow's mites does but confirm the divine principle. Paul's direction to each Christian to give as the Lord prospered him, and to do it regularly on the first day of the week, completes the harmony of the Bible teaching on this point." — *Rev. William Elliot Griffis, D.D.*

2. *Church leadership.* If any one sees anything that needs to be done in and through the church, that perception constitutes God's call to him to go ahead and get it done. If the regularly appointed leaders, the church officers and committee chairmen, will not lead, then elect others in their places. And do not wait so long as Joash waited for Jehoiada!

3. *Simple methods.* The simpler a way of working, in the church or elsewhere, usually the more effective is it. Abolish needless red tape.

4. *What young folks can do to help.* Your scholars will make a great mistake if they think that they cannot begin church work till they are of mature age. If they do not contribute from their pennies when young, they are not likely to give generously and systematically from their dollars when old. The church in all its departments needs the young folks quite as much as their elders. Their presence is needed in the meetings. Their voices are needed in the singing. Their sentences of prayer and testimony are needed in the prayer meetings. Their flowers are needed on the pulpit. Young people have painted many a church building, furnished many a church with new cushions, put in many stained-glass windows, tended and beautified many a church-yard, advertised thousands of church services, run thousands of errands for busy pastors. Best of all, as the young are faithful in their Sunday

10. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's [a] scribe and the high priest came up, and they [b] put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the LORD.

11. And they gave the money, being told, that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they [c] laid paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD,

12. And to and to the masons, and the hewers of stone, and to buy for buying timber and hewed hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that [d] was laid out for the house to repair it. it.

13. Howbeit But [1] there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls cups of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was that was brought into the house of the LORD:

14. But for they gave that to the workmen, them that did the work, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD.

15. Moreover [2] they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: give to them that did the work: for they dealt faithfully.

[1] 2 Chron. 24: 14.
[2] 2 Kings 22: 7.

a Or, *secretary*.
b Heb., *bound up*.
c Heb., *brought it forth*.
d Heb., *went forth*.

schools and Christian Endeavor societies, they are training themselves to take the places of their elders when those places are left vacant, as they must be before many years. The church work of the future depends on the training of the young people of the present.

III. **Faithful Laborers.** — Vs. 10–16. ***How did Joash's plan succeed?*** Admirably; it brought in much money. People like to give directly to a cause, to know just how their money is spent. They are far more likely to respond to special than to general appeals.

What provision was made for an accounting of the funds? The king's secretary and the high priest went together to the chest, counted the money, and put it up in bags. This was done, according to Chronicles, in the king's office. "This arrangement became permanent, being expressly mentioned as late as the time of King Josiah." — *Professor Cornill.* "They checked each other, and prevented suspicion on either side. No man who regards his own reputation will consent to handle public money without some one to stand over him and see what he does with it." — *Maclaren.*

How was the money, thus audited, paid out? It was given to the overseers of the work (we should call them contractors), and they paid it out to the carpenters, builders, masons, and the men that furnished the timber, hewn stone, and (Chronicles) iron and brass. The workers were paid "doubtless according to the excellent rule prescribed in the book called Leviticus: 'The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.' As in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard — true mirror of the ancient law — each man was paid when his day's work was done." — *Griffis.*

For what was the money not spent? "Nothing was spent on mere ornaments — everything was devoted to the solid repair of the fabric." — *Stanley.* See v. 13. In 2 Chron. 24: 14, however, we are told how the surplus left over from these repairs was used in making the Temple utensils. In all church work progress is made only by fixing upon a goal and allowing nothing to turn one aside till the goal is reached. "First things first."

What exception was made to the general rule of auditing, and checking one another? No account was kept (v. 15) with the overseers who paid the workmen, **for they dealt faithfully.** "The way to get the best out of a man, if he has any reliableness in him, is to trust him utterly, and to show him that you do. 'It is a shame to tell Arnold a lie; he always believes us,' said the Rugby boys about their great head-master. There is a time for using all precautions, and a time for using none. Businesslike methods do not consist in spying at the heels of one's agents, but in picking the right men, and, having proved them, giving them a free hand. And is not that what the great Lord and Employer does with his servants, and is it not part of the reason why Jesus gets more out of us than any one else can do, that he trusts us more?" — *Maclaren.*

TESTS OF OUR FIDELITY. ***How can we prove ourselves faithful workers in the modern***

temple of our Lord? By honestly holding our money as God's stewards, keeping careful account of our receipts and comparing them with our expenditures in God's service. By remembering that "time is money," and holding ourselves to as careful reckoning for our spending of hours as of dollars. By perceiving that speech is our noblest and most distinctive human characteristic, and that therefore it above all our powers and possessions should be freely consecrated to God. By watching our thoughts and our ambitions, noting whether our day-dreams and longings go out after the things for which God also longs. Faithfulness in these four things — money, time, speech, and thought — will make us ideal church workers.

MISFORTUNE FOR THE TEMPLE. 2 Kings 12: 17, 18 tells us of an expedition against Judah made by Hazael, king of Syria, and of how Joash purchased the departure of the powerful enemy by a rich tribute. This humiliating gift was made up of all the treasures that had accumulated in the Temple since Asa bribed Benhadad (1 Kings 15: 18) for the same purpose. The disaster is a plain indication that God's favor had left Joash. If the king had been living as he ought, Jehovah would have been as ready to deliver him from Syria as he was to deliver Hezekiah from Assyria under similar circumstances.

THE SAD END OF JOASH. Indeed, we are told in 2 Chron. 24: 17, 18 just how God's favor left Joash. "The rich and powerful Phœnicia was to the upper Hebrew classes of that day what Normandy was to the court of the Confessor, or Paris, under Louis Quatorze, to the later Stuarts. The worship of Jehovah might do for the common people, but that of Baal was the only one fit for the great." — *Geikie.* After Jehoiada's death the nobles had their way with the king, and won his consent to the introduction once more of Phœnician idolatries. The Chronicler tells how prophets arose to protest against this, the boldest being Jehoiada's son Zechariah (not the author of the last book of the Old Testament). By Joash's express command this holy man was slain in the very courts of the Temple.

Some think that the murder of Joash was in revenge for this killing of the high priest Zechariah. However that may be, after the departure of Hazael the disgraced king took to his bed in the castle of Millo, and there he was slain by two of his attendants. "His apostasy, his crimes, and perhaps above all his want of success as a king, had left him no friends. Even a burial in the royal tomb was denied him, though he was allowed to rest within the city walls." — *Geikie.* Such was the sad ending of a life that had begun with so much promise — all because Joash departed from his allegiance to Jehovah.

AN AMBITION FOR CHURCH WORK.

1. The crown of Joash's life was what he did for the house of God. Such work will be the crown of any life that undertakes it.

2. There is room in God's house for all kinds of workers and all degrees of skill. Even the youngest scholar in the Sunday school can make a helpful contribution to the Temple service.

3. Work for the church should be progressive; we should become more efficient church workers every year. To this end it is necessary that we begin young, just as singers and piano-players begin young while their muscles are pliant and easily trained.

4. "Jack of all trades and master of none" is as true of church work as of work in secular callings. Every young Christian will be wise if he selects some line of work for God and cultivates it as his specialty. It may be singing, or teaching, or social work, or administrative work, or evangelistic work, or the use of the pen. Whatever it is, he cannot make the selection too early or begin too soon on his preparation. It will be the best work of his life, and it deserves the best years of his life and the fulness of his powers.

"Oh! be thou zealous in thy youth;
Fill every day with noble toils,
Fight for the victories of Truth,
And deck thee with her deathless spoils.
For those whose lives are in retreat,
Their valor and ambition flown,
In vain the 'larum drum is beat,
In vain the battle-trumpet blown!"
— *Oriental, translated by W. R. Alger.*

LESSON V. — April 30.

GOD'S PITY FOR THE HEATHEN. (FOREIGN MISSIONARY LESSON). — Jonah 3 : 1—4 : 11.

PRINT Jonah 3 : 5—4 : 11. COMMIT v. 11. READ Jonah.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.* — MATT. 28: 19.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read the entire book of Jonah.
2. See the reference to Jonah in 2 Kings 14: 25.
3. Read Christ's references to Jonah, Matt. 12: 39–41; Luke 11: 29, 30.
4. For ancient estimates of the wickedness of Nineveh see Nah. 3; Isa. 10: 5–27.
5. Find echoes of Jonah's psalm in the Psalms: compare Jonah 2: 3 with Psa. 88: 6, 7; 42: 7; v. 4 with Psa. 31: 22; 84; v. 5 with Psa. 69: 1; v. 7 with Psa. 107: 5; 18: 6; v. 8 with Deut. 32: 21; v. 9 with Psa. 42: 4; 50: 14–23.
6. In regard to the fasting and mourning of the cattle, Jonah 3: 8, compare Joel 1: 20.
7. For the application to God of the term "repentance," as in Jonah 3: 10, see Jer. 18: 8; Ex. 32: 14.
8. Compare Jonah's dejection at Nineveh with Elijah's after the Carmel struggle, 1 Kings 19.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Urge the scholars to read the entire book at home, telling them in how few minutes it can be done. Ask them to form brief titles to the chapters (W. W. White's titles are, "The Storm Chapter, The Prayer Chapter, The Sackcloth Chapter, The Gourd Chapter." Send them to the encyclopædias to learn all they can about Nineveh. Ask them to write out lists of all the missionary lessons they can find in Jonah.

Manual Work. — The scholars may make maps of the region from Tarshish to Nineveh. They may make wooden or pasteboard models of ancient ships.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — Our Missionary Calls. The Greatness and Wickedness of Nineveh. Modern Ninevehs in Mission Lands. How Disobedience Is Punished. The Wonderful Effect of Missionary Preaching.

Learn by Heart. — V. 11; Psa. 34: 18; Matt. 12: 41.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jeroboam II., king of Israel, in whose time Jonah prophesied, reigned (Beecher) B.C. 832–792, (Hastings) B.C. 804–763. Amos and Hosea were contemporary prophets.

Place. — Gath-hepher, north of Nazareth in Galilee, the Mediterranean Sea, Joppa, and Nineveh.

Kings. — Jeroboam II. attained suzerainty over all the peoples from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. "The writer of the book of Jonah has presented accurately the values of the historical situation. It was the unknown disasters in Assyria, just after Ramman-nirari had broken the power of Damascus, that rendered the successes of Jeroboam possible." — *Beecher.*

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Light on the Story of Jonah, by Henry Clay Trumbull. *The Story of Jonah*, by Professor Townsend. *The Story of Jonah*, by A. Raleigh. *Bible Characters*, by Charles Reade. *Old Testament Characters* and *Landmarks of Old Testament History*, by Geikie. *Famous Men of the Old Testament*, by Wharton. Principal Adeney, in *Men of the Old Testament*. George Adam Smith, in *The Expositor's Bible*. *The Minor Prophets*, by Farrar. Whyte's *Bible Characters*, *Ahithophel to Nehemiah*. Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible*. Morrison's *Footsteps of the Flock*. Maurice's *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*.

Doom and Deliverance: the Missionary Message, Illustrated by the Story of Jonah. The Foreign Missionary Lesson of the Quarter.

Introduction. — The theme of this lesson is one of the very greatest importance, for we are to learn what missions are to do, and in what spirit. Nowhere in the Old Testament is this better shown than in the book of Jonah. Though small in size, the book is large in its scope and meaning; and it is unfortunate that the wide discussion over it has centered upon the comparatively unimportant supernatural elements of the book. Let us take a survey of the entire book, thus:

SUBJECT: DOOM AND DELIVERANCE: THE MISSIONARY MESSAGE.

I. THE BOOK OF JONAH.

II. THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET (chapter 1).

III. THE REPENTANT PROPHET (chapter 2).

IV. THE OBEDIENT PROPHET (chapter 3).

V. THE CHAGRINED PROPHET (chapter 4).

THE TWOFOLD MESSAGE OF MISSIONS.

I. **The Book of Jonah.** — THE AUTHOR. "Jonah himself was unquestionably a historical personage." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary.* "He lived in the reign of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, in whose time Amos's work was accomplished. According to 2 Kings 14: 25, he prophesied the recovery from Syria of the lost border possessions of Israel. He is said to have belonged to Gath-hepher, a town of Zebulon, and his grave is still shown in the vicinity of Nazareth." — *Dummelow.* "Gath-hepher was about an hour's walk north of Nazareth. Jonah was therefore 'a prophet out of Galilee.' Jewish legend said that he was the son of the widow of Sarepta, whom Elijah had restored to life; and also that he was the youth whom Elisha had sent to anoint Jehu, king of Israel." — *Farrar.*

DATE OF THE BOOK. "We need not be surprised to find that this enigmatical book is ascribed by competent and devout scholars to various dates that range between the eighth and fourth centuries before Christ." — *Professor Elmslie.* Those that consider it of late date do not regard Jonah as its author. "The book does not profess to have been written by Jonah himself. The prophet is always spoken of in the third person, and Nineveh (Jonah 3: 3) is alluded to as no longer existent." — *Farrar.* On the other hand, Principal Douglas says: "There is no sufficient reason for asserting that this little book was not written by Jonah. Other prophets — Isaiah, Amos, notably Jeremiah, and, so far, Ezekiel — give historical details of themselves in connection with their prophesying; and there is no proof that any of the other prophets did not write each his own book." "No other satisfactory theory of authorship has been suggested. The graphic style of the book harmonizes with the vigorous and resolute character of Jonah as portrayed in its pages." — *Cambridge Bible.*

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK. "That it is true history has been held by the most learned commentators from the fathers and reformers unto the present day. But for the miracles which mark the narrative, it is doubtful if this view would ever have been questioned. And to its miracles it would seem that no believer in the New Testament could raise objection." — *Rev. Henry M. Grout, D.D.* Some scholars regard the book as an allegory or parable. "This conception of the prophecy is much in vogue, for it avoids the miracle. It interprets Jonah as a type of Israel fleeing from the duty imposed on the nation to bear witness to the world for God." — *Davis's Bible Dictionary.* The other view is that the book is genuine history. This view is upheld by the historical form of the book, the fact that the Jews regarded the narrative as historical, the fact that Jonah was a historical personage, and by Christ's solemn references to the book (Matt. 12: 39–41; Luke 11: 29, 30). As to the last point, some hold that "our Lord had no thought of confirming or not confirming the historic character of the story. He was using an illustration: it surely matters not whether that illustration be drawn from the realms of fact or of poetry." — *Prof. George Adam Smith.* "And yet are we to suppose Christ to say that imaginary persons who at the imaginary preaching of an imaginary prophet repented in imagination, shall rise up in that day and condemn the actual impenitence of those his actual hearers? that

the fictitious characters of a parable shall be arraigned at the same bar with the living men of that generation?"— *Perowne*, in *The Cambridge Bible*.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK. "We might almost say that the purpose of this book of Jonah is to teach the possibility and efficacy of repentance, and to show how the penitent man, heathen or Jew, ever finds in God changed dealings corresponding to his changed heart." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.* But "the lesson of repentance is only a part, however important, of the higher and wider lesson which this book is designed to teach us." — *Cambridge Bible.* "That God has granted *to the Gentiles also* repentance unto life (Acts 11: 18) is nowhere else in the Old Testament so vividly illustrated." — *Expositor's Bible.* "Nowhere else in the Old Testament is there so close an approximation to the great saying of 1 John 4: 7, 'For love is of God, and every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God.'" — *Dummelow.* "This lesson is of immense significance, a wonderful advance on Judaism, a magnificent anticipation of Christianity." — *Principal Adeney.* Thus Jonah "first taught by example the truth which Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue of Nazareth, and Peter learned on the housetop at Joppa, and Paul took as his guiding star." — *Maclaren.*

ESTIMATES OF THE BOOK. "The book of Jonah is perhaps more derided than any other in the whole Bible, yet it is a book of the highest value." — *Farrar.* "It is one of the deepest and grandest things ever written." — *Professor Cornill.* Charles Reade, the novelist, wrote: "Jonah is the most beautiful story ever written in so small a compass. It is in 48 verses, or 1,328 English words. Now, take 1,328 words in our current narratives: how far do they carry you? Why, ten to one, you get to nothing at all but chatter, chatter, chatter. Even in those close models, 'Robinson Crusoe,' 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Candide,' 'Rasselas,' 1,328 words do not carry the reader far; yet in the 1,328 words of Jonah you have a wealth of incident, and all the dialogue needed to carry on the grand and varied action. You have also character, not stationary, but growing just as Jonah's grew, and a plot that would bear volumes, yet worked out without haste or crudity in 1,328 words." "I hold that the book of Jonah is second to no part of the Old Testament in originality of thought and breadth of conception." — *George Matheson.* "The book touches the high-water mark of Old Testament theology. We cannot wonder that Christ used the book on a memorable occasion, nor that it was the means of the conversion of Cyprian." — *R. F. Horton, D.D.* "No book of the Old Testament more nearly approaches the grandeur of the New Testament conception of the fatherly love of God." — *Professor Elmslie.* "The book is of priceless value, and will remain so as long as men need to learn what God thinks of the teeming masses in the world's great cities, what we ought to think of them, and how God judges us by our judgment of them." — *Dummelow.*

II. **The Disobedient Prophet.** — Jonah 1. ***What was the missionary call that came to Jonah?*** "This little biography begins with the announcement that God asked a man to do something for him. It is significant that other Bible writers (Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Micah) begin the story of their lives at the same point. Our acquaintance with Paul begins with his summons to duty, and the apostles were not known until Christ bade them follow him." — *Rev. Edward S. Tead.* Jonah's call was to go to Nineveh, the greatest and wickedest city in the world, and threaten it with doom from Jehovah. "Here was an honor for a petty seer! His betters would have received it with a pious exultation. Samuel or Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist or Paul would have risen like lions and gone forth with strong faith and pious pride to thunder against great Nineveh." — *Charles Reade.*

Why was this errand particularly difficult? (1) "Other prophets threatened this mighty city with doom — Nahum, for instance. But this was always done in the security of their own country. It was like the case of Jews in England denouncing the anti-Semitic Russian government. Jonah's case is very different. He is to go to Nineveh and deliver his message of doom in the city itself." — *Principal Adeney.* (2) Jonah's name, which means "dove," may indicate his personal timidity. Nineveh was full of violence. Nahum described it as "the bloody city," "all full of lies and robbery." Zephaniah calls it "filthy and polluted," "the oppressing city." "The Ninevites were gross and sensual, cruel in war, eagerly self-indulgent; a people of splendid physique and surprising courage, but cultivating bodily excellences and seeking physical pleasure without thought of their higher nature. Should Jonah, an unknown citizen of a despised land, venture into a city notorious for its drunkenness and violence, denounce its sin and threaten its destruction? The act were madness, it were certain death." — *Addison P. Foster, D.D.* (3) It was against all precedent for a Hebrew prophet to interest himself thus in the welfare of a Gentile nation. As the Jews thought, "the kingdom of God was a Jewish kingdom. The providence of

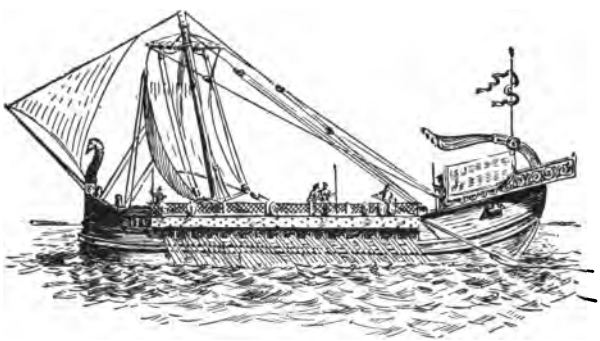
God was a Jewish providence. The triumph of God was a Jewish triumph." — *Matheson.* (4) Therefore Jonah's fundamental reason for hesitation was probably, as the sequel shows, because he feared that his errand would turn out to be an errand of mercy. "He refused because he feared success. If he had been sent to destroy Nineveh, he would probably have gone gladly." — *Maclaren.*

How, therefore, did Jonah answer his missionary call? By running away. He fled "from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1: 3), "as if God were, in his mind, only a local divinity, ruling over Israel, but unable to see the fugitive if he fled far enough beyond his territory." — *Geikie.* Jonah should have asked himself, "If the God of Israel sees what is going on at distant Nineveh, and is concerned about it, is it to be supposed that his unfaithful servant will escape his notice, like some defaulting apprentice lad, who hopes to elude his master's notice by running away to sea?" — *Adeney.*

Whither did Jonah flee? Nineveh was about six hundred miles to the east; Jonah planned to go as far as he could in the opposite direction. "Down from his inland home and across the plain of Esdraelon, up the hills of Ephraim, and over to the flowery plain of Sharon, along this plain as far as the seaport of Joppa, the disobedient prophet hurries. Here Phœnician ships would touch on their way from Tyre to Europe. Jonah jumps on board a vessel bound for the most remote place known to the ancient world, Tarshish, that is Tartessus, on the Guadalquivir in Spain." — *Adeney.*

How did God interfere with Jonah's plans? By sending one of those sudden, treacherous storms so frequent on the Mediterranean, a storm so fierce that even the skilful Phœnician sailors were compelled to throw out their cargo, and were filled with terror.

ILLUSTRATION. Every sin involves others in the suffering, as these fine, innocent sailors were made to suffer with Jonah. "No mother can be false to motherhood but that fine vessel christened '*Home*' will suffer. No father can reject the calls of fatherhood and expect a happy voyage for those he loves. If any boy refuses to be true, others will suffer for it as well as he. If any girl refuses to be kind, there will be less sunshine in some other lives. The God of Jonah calls every one of us; and the sea becomes wild for *others* when we disobey." — *Rev. G. H. Morrison.*



Ancient Ship.

How did Jonah meet the storm? "Jonah is asleep. His sleep is very different from that of Jesus, who also slept amid all the noise and confusion of a storm — the howling blast, the fearful wash of waves, the ugly rolling of the vessel, the tramping of men to and fro, the loud shouts of the captain. Yet how different is his position. Jesus sleeps with perfect trust in One who rules the winds and holds the waters in the hollow of his hand; Jonah sleeps from mere physical weariness, or perhaps from the numbness of soul that sometimes follows defeat in a struggle with temptation." — *Adeney.* Compare also Paul's heroic conduct in a storm on the same waters. Jonah had unfitted himself to give the sailors any such guidance and good cheer as Paul gave.

How did the sailors conduct themselves? "Their conduct is part of the lesson of the book; for, heathen as they are, they have yet a sense of dependence, and they pray; they are full of courage, battling with the storm, jettisoning the cargo, and doing everything possible to save the ship." — *Maclaren.* Their blind superstition hits the truth for once, and the lot points to Jonah as the sinner because of whom the storm has come. "Then Jonah, faulty as his character was, shone out like the sun." — *Charles Reade.* "He calls upon the sailors to throw him into the sea — to purchase their peace by his sacrifice. That call is the finest thing in the picture. It is the real miracle. It marks the enlargement of the man." — *Matheson.* "Yet he is not to be compared with the heroic Roman, Quintus Curtius, leaping into the Forum chasm. Shame and despair have almost driven him to suicide."—*Adeney.* "But the honest fellows were loath to take him at his word, and the

poor rowers, at their different banks of oars, plied the long sweeps more earnestly than ever." — *Geikie.* Even when obliged at last to throw Jonah overboard, they did it with a prayer to Jehovah. And at once the sea was calm.

How is this like Christ's atonement for our sin? "Leave out the fact that Jonah was sinful, and he becomes an eminent type of Christ. Substitution saves the mariners; substitution saves sinners. This is the essential oil of gospel truth." — *Spurgeon.*

"Sign of the Son of man — for our sakes cast
Into the heart of the tempestuous deep,
Where rolling waves of justice o'er him passed
And rocked our Surety in a three days' sleep;
Till from God's face a gracious sunbeam fell,
And he awoke and rose — and all was well!"
— *Richard Wilton.*

What are we to think about the miracle of the great fish that received Jonah? 1. Observe that this miracle, of which so much has been said and written, is really a side issue in the book of Jonah. Acceptance or rejection of it does not affect the chief teachings of the book. "Two verses exhaust all that the story has to tell of the method of Jonah's deliverance." — *Farrar.*

2. Remember that this miracle, or any other, must be granted to be possible to the Almighty. "There can be no scale of the miraculous. To infinite power it is no easier to pick up a pin than to stop all the planets in their courses for a time and then send them on again."— *Charles Reade.*

The Story of Jonah, from the Catacomb St. Luciana.

3. Note that the miracle is according to zoölogical possibilities. "It is idle to make difficulties about a *whale* swallowing Jonah; in the Hebrew it is nothing more nor less than a 'fish,' with the adjective 'great' attached."— *Principal Douglas.* It might have been a shark, "which could easily have swallowed a man whole, some of these monsters being over sixty feet in length." — *M. B. Wharton, D.D.* Yet "Mr. Frank Bullen's account of the cachalot whale shows conclusively that the sea contains a fish which could swallow a man without injuring him." — *R. F. Horton, D.D.* "There is not a shipmaster, or an officer, or an experienced sailor who has been on a whaling voyage who will question the following statement recently made by one of the crew of a New Bedford, Mass., whale-ship, that he, though a man of large build, weighing 170 pounds, frequently has passed through the mouth and throat of a dead sperm whale. A naturalist, M. Brüniche, is authority for the statement that a shark was taken in the Mediterranean near Marseilles in which were two tunnies whose normal weight is a thousand pounds; in addition to these tunnies was a man fully dressed, his clothing being untorn. Pliny in the first century, 50 A.D., gives an account of the skeleton of a sea-monster forty feet in length, 'whose ribs were higher than those of the Indian elephant.' This skeleton, Pliny says, 'was brought from Joppa, a city of Judea, and exhibited in Rome by M. Scaurus.'" — *Prof. L. T. Townsend, D.D. The Literary Digest* gives an account of a sailor, James Bartley, of the whaler Star of the East, who in February, 1891, was swallowed by a whale, and after a day and a night came out alive, but unconscious, and, when revived, was delirious for three weeks.

Fourth Century Gem.

4. Note especially that the miracle is one that fitted wonderfully into the special circumstances. "Prominent among the divinities of ancient Assyria, as shown by the monuments, was Dagan, a creature part man and part fish. The divinity was in some instance represented as an upright figure, with the head of a fish above the head of a man, the open mouth of the fish forming a mitre as the man's sacred head-dress, and the feet of a man extending below the tail of the fish. . . . So the people of Nineveh were believers in a divinity who, from time to time, sent messages to them by a personage who rose out of the sea, as part fish and part man. This being so, is there not a perceptible reasonableness in the narrated miracle of Jonah and the fish, and of the wonderful success of the fish-ejected

Jonah as a preacher in the Assyrian capital? What better heralding, as a divinely sent messenger to Nineveh, could Jonah have had, than to be thrown up out of the mouth of a great fish, in the presence of witnesses, say on the coast of Phœnicia where the fish-god was a favorite object of worship? Such an incident would have inevitably aroused the mercurial nature of Oriental observers, so that a multitude would be ready to follow the seemingly new avatar of the fish-god. . . . Berosus gives the name of the Assyrian fish-god as 'Oannes.' Is there in this name Oannes any reference to Jonah, as the supposed manifestation of the fish-god himself? . . . As soon as modern discoverers unearthed the mound that had for long centuries — perhaps from the days of Nineveh's destruction — been known by the name of Neby Yunas (or Jonah's Hill), they found beneath it the ruined palaces of kings of Nineveh."— *Henry Clay Trumbull, D.D.*

DISOBEDIENT TO OUR HEAVENLY VISIONS. "Jonah may be compared in some measure to Augustine, the Apostle of the English, who went on his errand very reluctantly at the command of Gregory, took fright on the road, and would have given up the project if his master had not compelled him to proceed." — *Adeney.*

What a contrast is Jonah to Christ, who went up to Jerusalem with a stedfast face, though he knew that the cross awaited him there! And what a contrast to Paul, who went down to Jerusalem from Ephesus though he knew that chains awaited him there.

Every missionary has the spirit of Alexander Mackay, the Scottish student of engineering in Berlin, who, as soon as Stanley's appeal for missionaries for the Dark Continent met his eye, left his studies and his life plans and gave his life for Africa as the greatest of mechanic missionaries. He became engineer, carpenter, printer, doctor, surgeon, tailor, baker, sawyer, boat-builder, weaver, bridge-builder, and school-teacher to the black people of Uganda, and founded a noble, Christian civilization in the very heart of savagery. Every true missionary has learned to sing,

> "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
> Over mountain, or plain, or sea;
> I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
> I'll be what you want me to be." — *Mary Brown.*

III. **The Repentant Prophet.** — Jonah 2. ***How long was Jonah in the great fish?*** Three days and three nights, which, according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, might, as in the case of our Lord's stay in the tomb, have been only one entire day and parts of the day preceding and the day following.

How could Jonah have remained alive so long? The examples cited above prove it possible, though of course God could have accomplished it even outside the ordinary course of nature. "Unless we admit the possibility of such divine interpositions the foundations of the Christian religion are gone, and our orthodox faith is no longer worth contending for." — *Professor Townsend.*

How could Jonah have composed the psalm (chapter 2), under such circumstances? We are not obliged to suppose that he did. "What is here given as the prophet's prayer is doubtless the brief recollection, afterwards recorded, of the kind of thoughts which had filled his mind during his dark sojourn, with the addition of some pious and grateful sentiments caused by the review." — *John Foster.* So also Luther.

> "Who keptë Jonas in the fish's maw,
> Till he was spouted up at Nineveh?
> Well may men know, it was no wight but He
> That kept the people Ebraike (Hebrew) from drenching,
> With dryë feet through the sea passing." — *Chaucer.*

What is the nature of Jonah's psalm? It is made up almost entirely of quotations from the Psalms, like the Magnificat of Mary. "And yet the psalm of Jonah has strong features, which, so far as we know, are original to it. The horror of the great deep has nowhere in the Old Testament been described with such power or such conciseness. The psalm is not a mere string of quotations, but a living unity." — *Expositor's Bible.* It is Jonah's profound expression of repentance, and praise to Jehovah for his salvation.

ILLUSTRATION. "Sorrow and chastisement turn up the subsoil. If a man has any good in him, it generally comes to the top when he is afflicted and looks death in the face. If there is nothing but gravel beneath, it too will be brought up by the plough."— *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

IV. **The Obedient Prophet.** — Jonah 3. It is striking to notice the change in Jonah as soon as he ceased to run away from his duty and became obedient to God's command,

5. So And the people of Nĭn'e-veh [1] believed God: and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6. For word came unto And the tidings reached the king of Nĭn'e-veh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, [2] and sat in ashes.

7. [3] And he caused it to be proclaimed made proclamation and [a] published through Nĭn'e-veh by the decree of the king and his [b] nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8. But let man and beast them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, [4] let them turn every one from his evil way, and from [5] the violence that is in their hands.

[1] Matt. 12: 41; Luke 11: 32.
[2] Job 2: 8.
[3] 2 Chron. 20: 3.
[4] Isa. 58: 6.
[5] Isa. 59: 6.
[a] Heb., *said.*
[b] Heb., *great men.*

What was the command? The first repeated: "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim what I bade you proclaim, the doom of their sin."

How great was Nineveh? "Nineveh was the London of the ancient world." — *Farrar.* "Fifteen hundred towers, each two hundred feet high, guarded walls round four cities, in a long quadrangle of sixty miles, rising to the height of a hundred feet, in such mighty strength that even their top was a broad highway on which three chariots could drive abreast. Within the vast space thus enclosed rose palaces of almost inconceivable size and grandeur, amidst gardens and grounds in which the highest art had created every beauty that could gratify pride or ravish the senses. One palace alone, disclosed in its ruins by the toil of the explorer, revealed twenty-seven huge gates of entrance, guarded by colossal human-headed bulls and gigantic lions, and seventy-one halls and chambers, adorned throughout, round all their sides, by great squares of alabaster covered with sculptures of the warlike deeds of the 'king of kings' and varied scenes from civil or military life. Vast temples, built in stages, each less in its square than the one below it, rose like mighty pyramids into the sky, their tops the lofty observatories from which consecrated observers of the heavens watched and recorded the movements of the stars and planets." — *Geikie.* "Upon terraces and substructions of enormous breadth rose storied palaces, arsenals, barracks, libraries and temples. A lavish water system spread in all directions from canals with massive embankments and sluices. Gardens were lifted into mid-air, filled with rich plants and rare and beautiful animals. Alabaster, silver, gold and precious stones relieved the dull masses of brick and flashed sunlight from every frieze and battlement. Beyond the walls were great suburbs, and beyond the suburbs other towns, league upon league of dwellings, so closely set upon the plain as to form one vast complex of population which is known to Scripture as *The Great City.*" — *Expositor's Bible.* In the ruins of Nineveh have been found "numberless cylinders and seals and slabs of gray alabaster sculpture in bas-relief and inscribed with beautiful arrow-headed characters. Upon these slabs are inscriptions of great interest to Bible students. They contain references to Hiram, king of Tyre, who flourished about two hundred years before Jonah; and references to Jehu, son of Omri, and to Benhadad, king of Damascus, both of whom flourished about one hundred years before Jonah; and there are references to Hezekiah, who was king of Judah about one hundred years after Jonah."— *Townsend.* The population of Nineveh was probably from 600,000 to 1,000,000, — a vast city in those days. Within the walls were large open spaces for farms and pastures, that the city might be amply able to stand a siege. It was not compact, like a modern city.

What was Jonah's proclamation to this great city? "It was a sole, unconditional, terrible message of five Hebrew words, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown.' From sunrise to sunset the crowded streets, the vast spaces full of cruel palaces, saw with astonishment the rude figure in its one rough garment of hair-cloth; heard with terror the oft-repeated, unvarying cry. It was like the 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' of John the Baptist; it was like the cry of Jesus, son of Hanan, the unlettered rustic, for four years through Jerusalem before its siege, shouting, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem.'"— *Farrar.* "It was like the cry of old Cato before the Roman Senate, '*Delenda est*

9. [1] Who [can tell if] [knoweth whether] God will [not] turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10. [2] And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, [that] [which] he [had] said [that] he would do unto them; and he did [it] not.

[1] 2 Sam. 12: 22; Joel 2: 14. [2] Jer. 18: 8; Amos 7: 3, 6.

Carthago,' which caused the destruction of the great African city. Dr. Woolf tried this plan in the streets of Bokhara with great success. George Whitefield was an example of this kind of preaching. I read recently of a boy whose piety led him to stand on London Bridge and cry simply, 'No other name,' to all the thousands who passed hourly by, with the result that many were converted." — *Wharton*. Jonah was like "that gaunt fanatic who, with flaming fire on his head and madness in his eyes, terrified London in the plague." — *Maclaren*.

THE MISSIONARY PROCLAMATION OF SIN AND DOOM. The first duty of a missionary preacher is to make men realize their sin and their need of a Saviour.

When Miss Fidelia Fiske, the missionary Mary Lyon, was teaching in Persia, one day a Koordish chief, a vile and desperate character, brought his daughter to the school, and was converted before he left the premises. All he could say was, "My great sins! My great Saviour!"

In India Jiwan Das was a hired robber, a professional thug. One day he attacked a native Christian preacher on the road and took from him his clothes and also some Bibles. The latter the robber gave to his son, who could read, and the boy happened to read aloud to his father Num. 32: 23, "Be sure your sin will find you out." The robber was driven by that passage to seek out the missionary, and in time he became an exemplary Christian.

What reception may Jonah well have expected? "That the towns-people would laugh at him for a day or two, and then drag him through their gutters, or whip him through the streets with his prophecy pinned to his back in cuneiform letters." — *Charles Reade*.

What was the effect of Jonah's cry? "'Come and see a man who has just come up out of hell,' whispered the trembling people of Ravenna to one another as Dante staggered through their streets. 'Come,' said the men of Nineveh, 'and hear what the prophet from Israel has to say to our city, for he has just been vomited out of the fish's belly.'" — *Whyte*. "'Repetition,' says the Latin proverb, 'is the mother of studies.' It is also the mother of powerful impressions. There was something haunting in the ceaseless cry of this alien prophet of the unknown God. Men woke at night with it ringing in their ears. Mothers stopped singing and shuddered when they heard it. It echoed from the cottage to the palace and touched the heart of the king upon the throne." — *Rev. G. H. Morrison*. "I have known a priest to frighten a whole Mussulman town to tears by publicly proclaiming that he had received a divine commission to announce a coming earthquake or plague." — *Layard*. "It was thus when Nathan confronted David; thus when Paul was summoned before Felix; thus when Luther faced the Diet of Worms." — *Townsend*. "Just as on the day when the awful news came to Athens of the utter defeat and destruction of her fleet at Ægospotami, the cry of woe began at the Piræus, and ran down the long walls to the city, and on that night 'not a man slept,' not only from sorrow for the past or terror for the future, but also from remorse, because they felt that what was coming upon them was a retribution for their own faithless and atrocious cruelty to Ægina, to Melos, and to Scione; — so at the cry of Jonah, which threatened them with retributive overthrow, Nineveh was stirred to the heart, and repented — repented and was saved." — *Farrar*.

How did the city try to propitiate Jehovah? By a universal fast, including the beasts, and by the wearing of sackcloth, this also including the beasts; and even the king sat in ashes. "The animals were doubtless horses, mules, asses, and camels, which were divested of their usual caparisons and ornaments, and invested with sackcloth for the occasion." — *Kitto*. "The Persians are said, by Herodotus, to have clipped the hair of the horses and baggage animals that they might seem to share in the mourning for a general." — *Dummelow*.

What was the result of this humility and repentance of the Ninevites? It was a heathen ceremony, but it had the right motive (v. 9). God responded to their change of heart, and the city was preserved from destruction.

How can this be reconciled with the prophecy of destruction? In that prophecy "the condition was involved and understood. The possibility of mercy was clearly under-

4: 1. But it displeased Jō'nah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I [1] fled before / hasted to flee unto Tar'shish: for I knew that thou art / art a [2] gracious God, and full of compassion, / merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, / plenteous in mercy, and repentest thee of the evil.

3. [3] Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for [4] it is / it is better for me to die than to live.

4. Then said the LORD, / And the LORD said, [a] Doest thou well to be angry?

5. So / Then Jō'nah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6. And the LORD God prepared a [b] gourd, and made it / it to come up over Jō'nah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. / evil case. So Jō'nah [c] was exceeding glad because / because of the gourd.

7. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

[1] Jonah 1: 3.
[2] Ex. 34: 6; Psa. 86: 5.
[3] 1 Kings 19: 4.
[4] V. 8.

a Or, *Art thou greatly angry?*
b Or, *Palma Christi.*
c Heb., *rejoiced with great joy.*

stood by Jonah, for he was displeased with it (Jonah 4: 2). It was understood also by the Ninevites, for they cried for long days and nights." — *Raleigh.*

ILLUSTRATION. "As a physician says to his patient who loves high living, 'If you continue to indulge as you are now doing, in forty days you will be a dead man,' so God said to the Ninevites, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.'" — *Monday Club Sermons.*

THE RESULTS OF MISSIONS. Modern missionaries have had the joy of seeing not merely great cities but entire nations turning to Jehovah as Nineveh did. It was thus when under Constantine Rome became Christian. It was thus when the Christian missionaries won Great Britain from heathenism. In Japan, though the Christians are as yet small numerically, they wield in the parliament and throughout the nation an influence many times greater than their numbers would warrant. The wonderful awakening of China is due to Christian missions. In Korea the native Christianity is fervent and missionary beyond even Christian nations. Hawaii was so thoroughly Christianized that foreign missionaries withdrew, until the recent influx of Asiatics. The erstwhile cannibal Fijis are now so devoutly Christian as in some points to put to shame our own land.

V. **The Chagrined Prophet.** — Jonah 4. ***How was Jonah affected by God's mercy?*** He had expected it, but still he was displeased and angry. "The prophet Jonah was both the elder son and the unmerciful servant of the Old Testament." — *Whyte.* "A witty Frenchman has defined an egotist as a character who will burn down another man's house to cook himself two eggs. Jonah would have burned down a populous and penitent city to enjoy his one egg, the self-satisfaction of a seer." — *Charles Reade.* The Jews felt toward their Assyrian oppressors as Eastern Christians feel toward their Mohammedan oppressors. George Adam Smith once asked a cultured and devout layman of the Greek Church why God created so many Mohammedans. The answer came hot and fast, "To fill up hell!" "And here we may once more notice a striking contrast. Jesus wept over doomed Jerusalem; Jonah was very angry because of Nineveh reprieved." — *Farrar.*

How did Jonah reproach God? In v. 2, which Cox truly calls the key to the whole book of Jonah, the prophet gives one of the fullest and finest descriptions of God's loving-kindness to be found in the entire Bible; but that loving-kindness was so far from Jonah's heart that he could think only of his injured self-esteem and the failure of his prediction. In his soul he committed the suicide's sin, and asked God to kill him.

How did God rebuke Jonah? First by the gentlest of reprimands (v. 4), "**Doest thou well to be angry?**" and then by an acted parable. Jonah withdrew from the city, to watch whether even yet his prediction might not be fulfilled. "So Jonah sulked while the angels in glory sang." — *Morrison.* There he built himself a booth, "like those used at the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, a rough structure made of poles and leaves." — *Dummelow.*

8. And it came to pass, when the sun (did arise, arose,) that God prepared a (vehement sultry) east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jō'nah, that he fainted, and (wished in requested for) himself (to that he might) die, and said, [1] (It is It is) better for me to die than to live.

9. And God said to Jō'nah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry (even even) unto death.

10. (Then said the LORD. And the LORD said,) Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which [a] came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11. (And and) should not I (spare have pity on) Nĭn'e-veh, [2] that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons [3] that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and (also also) much [4] cattle?

[1] V. 3.
[2] Jonah 1: 2.
[3] Deut. 1: 39.
[4] Psa. 36: 6.
a Heb., *was the son of the night.*

Then **God prepared a gourd.** "This book is full of this word *prepared*. We are told that the Lord prepared a great fish, a gourd, a worm, and a sultry east wind." — *Rev. F. B. Meyer.* This gourd was "most likely the bottle-gourd, often planted to grow over trellis-work." — *Dummelow.* "It is thought by some to have been the *palma christi*, or castor-oil plant, which still grows to a great size in the Jordan valley." — *Geikie.* "It is so-called because it is a five-leaved plant, one leaf of which outspread was thought to represent the hand of Christ. It grows to the height of eight, ten, twelve feet." — *Raleigh.*

Next in the acted parable came a worm, destroying the gourd, and the sirocco, driving its hot blast down upon the sweltering prophet. Then, "by a wonderfully true touch of human nature, Jonah transfers his pity for himself, as an ill-used prophet, to the gourd which likewise had been hardly treated." — *Dummelow.*

How did Jehovah point the moral of the acted parable? (vs. 10, 11.) "The argument is very fine. On the gourd, 'child of a night' (so the Hebrew), Jonah had spent neither labor nor strength. How much more should God, of whose goodness man's highest virtue is but the faintest shadow, pity and spare the helpless and ignorant works of his own hands who now fill the streets of Nineveh with pathetic appeals for forgiveness!" — *Dummelow.* God's pity extends to the little children, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and even to the cattle. "There is no finer close in literature than this ending. The divine question, 'Should not I have pity?' remains unanswered. Its echoes are heard still in every crowded haunt of men. Above the stir and din and wickedness the Divine Compassion is still brooding." — *Dummelow.*

Was Jonah converted? "Jonah did not write the book, but he must have communicated the facts and the main particulars of the dialogue. Now, no *unconverted* egotist tells a tale so fairly throughout, and the concluding dialogue so thoroughly against himself, as is done in this book. Moreover, he has given God the last word, and the best. Now, no unconverted egotist ever did that, nor ever will." — *Charles Reade.*

THE TWOFOLD MESSAGE OF MISSIONS.

Missionaries have two messages to carry to men: God's hatred of sin, God's love of the sinner.

"Jonah would never see a gourd again, or a mountain-blossom nipped by sudden frost, but he would remember that the love of God is broader than the measures of mankind." — *Morrison.*

The book of Jonah teaches us that the missionary is to be "the herald of God's mercy as well as of God's righteousness to all the nations; nay, that he cannot be the herald of the one unless he is also of the other." — *F. D. Maurice.*

And the crowning truth of this great little book is that, in spite of our pride and prejudice and misjudgment and exclusiveness, there are in every land many sons and daughters of God, as dear to him as those in Christian nations.

"Stern Prophet, in thy blindness
O whither wilt thou flee?
A God of loving-kindness
In all the world is he." — *Herbert Kynaston.*

LESSON VI. — May 7.

UZZIAH, KING OF JUDAH, HUMBLED.

2 Chronicles 26.

PRINT vs. 8-21. COMMIT vs. 19, 20. READ 2 Chronicles 26-28.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*** — PROV. 16: 18.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read 2 Chronicles 26, with the parallel passage, 2 Kings 15: 1–5.
2. As to "the corner gate" (v. 9), see 2 Chron. 25: 23.
3. As to "the turning of the wall" (v. 9), see Neh. 3: 19, 24.
4. As to "the valley gate" (v. 9), see Neh. 2: 13; 3: 13.
5. With v. 10 compare 1 Chron. 27: 25–31 — hints of David's husbandry.
6. See the references to the great earthquake in Amos 1: 1; Zech. 14: 5.
7. Compare with Uzziah's experience that of Korah and his companions, Num. 16: 1–40, especially the last verse.
8. Compare the leprosy of Miriam, Numbers 12, and of Gehazi, 2 Kings 5: 20–27.
9. Read the law of the leper, Lev. 13: 45, 46.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Have the class make lists at home of all the good things they can find out concerning Uzziah, and all the bad things, forming two parallel columns. Ask them to write twenty-five-word estimates of the characters of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz.

Manual Work. — Let the class make outline maps showing the extent of the two kingdoms under Uzziah and Jeroboam II. From a picture, let the scholars form models of the ancient catapults.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — How God Helped Uzziah. Weapons and Artillery in Ancient Times. Agriculture, and How It Strengthens a Nation. The Folly of War. The Harm That Comes from Pride. The Characters of Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz.

Learn by Heart. — Vs. 19, 20; Prov. 8: 13; 1 John 2: 15–17.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Uzziah's reign extended (Beecher) from B.C. 806 to B.C. 755; (Hastings) B.C. 801 to 749. Uzziah may have become a leper about B.C. 768, Jotham being the regent from that time.

Place. — The Temple in Jerusalem.

Kings. — In Israel, Jeroboam II. In Assyria, Shalmanezer III.

Prophets. — Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, the Zechariah of our lesson.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Chronicles, especially the Expositor's, Speaker's, Pulpit, Sermon, New Century, Ellicott, Cambridge, Parker's *People's Bible*, Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, *Handbooks for Bible Classes*. *Studies of the Old Testament*, by Phelps. *Early History of Israel and Palestine*, by Paton. *Kings of Israel and Judah*, by Rawlinson. Geikie's *Hours with the Bible*. Kitto's *Daily Bible Illustrations*. Wade's *Old Testament History*. Stanley's *History of the Jewish People*.

How Pride Has a Fall, as Shown in the Story of King Uzziah.

Introduction. — ***On the murder of King Joash (see Lesson IV.), who succeeded him as king of Judah?*** His oldest son, Amaziah, a man of piety and force, who slew the murderers of his father, sparing their sons, and then turned upon the enemies of his country, the Edomites south of the Dead Sea, who had been ravaging southern Judæa.

What mistake did Amaziah make in his preparations? He hired thousands of mercenaries from the Northern Kingdom, to aid him in the war. When a prophet rebuked him for thus involving himself with an idolatrous nation he dismissed the mercenaries, who,

on their way home, plundered the cities of Judah. Amaziah went on, however, and with his own troops conquered the Edomites in the Valley of Salt south of the Dead Sea, and thoroughly subdued the cruel nation.

Then, what sad mistake did he make? He brought home with him some of the Edomite idols and worshiped them, thus dishonoring Jehovah, who had so signally helped him, in favor of gods who had proved their own powerlessness! A courageous prophet rebuked him, but we are not told what the effect was.

What was the next mistake that Amaziah made? In his pride of success, and perhaps to avenge the towns which the Israelitish mercenaries had plundered, he sent a boastful message to Joash king of Israel, challenging him to fight. Joash promptly accepted the challenge, completely worsted Amaziah, captured Jerusalem, and went away with all the treasure of the Temple and royal palace, and with many of the citizens as hostages. Amaziah continued to reign for fifteen years, but his subjects never were contented, and at last they rose in revolt and murdered him.

What seems to have been Amaziah's fatal sin? Pride; and that was also the fatal sin of his son and successor, whose career we are to study to-day. The Bible gives many conspicuous examples of pride, notably those of Pharaoh, Goliath, Absalom, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar, but none are more striking than that of Uzziah. Let us study it with this outline:

I. UZZIAH'S GOOD BEGINNING (vs. 1–7).

II. UZZIAH'S GREAT PROSPERITY (vs. 8–15).

III. UZZIAH'S GREAT SIN (vs. 16–18).

IV. UZZIAH'S RIGHTEOUS PUNISHMENT (vs. 19–23).

V. TWO OTHER KINGS CONTRASTED (2 Chronicles 27, 28).

THE PERIL OF PRIDE, AND HOW TO AVOID IT.

I. **Uzziah's Good Beginning.**— Vs. 1–7. ***What king followed Amaziah on the throne of Judah?*** The son of Amaziah, Uzziah (called Azariah in Kings), a lad of sixteen, was chosen by the people. "The two forms of the name when written in Hebrew consonants closely resemble each other; the meanings moreover of the two are similar, 'Jehovah is my strength' (Uzziah), and 'Jehovah hath given help' (Azariah). Most likely the king bore both names; compare 'Abram' and 'Abraham,' 'Eliakim' and 'Jehoiakim' (2 Chron. 36: 4)." — *Cambridge Bible.* "Since it is especially noticed that he was chosen by the people, he was probably not the oldest son and the natural heir." — *Wade.*

What vigorous move did the young king make? He continued his father's conquest of the Edomites by fortifying Eloth, an important city at the head of the eastern branch of the Red Sea, thus putting Judah in a position to renew the rich commerce with India which Solomon had established. "The power which held Eloth naturally exercised a certain influence over the Sinaitic peninsula with its mines of copper and turquoise, and could enter readily into relations with Egypt." — *Rawlinson.* It was a notable enterprise for a lad of sixteen.

What three hints do you find of the sources of Uzziah's strong character? (1) "It is not without meaning that we have the record, **His mother's name was Jecoliah** (v. 3)." — *Pulpit Commentary.* The mention of her name implies that she was a woman of unusual character, powerfully impressing herself upon her boy. "The mother's heart is the child's schoolroom." — *Beecher.*

ILLUSTRATION. "What is wanting," said Napoleon one day to Madame Campan, "in order that the youth of France may be well educated?" "Good mothers," was the reply. The emperor was most forcibly struck with the answer. "Here," said he, "is a system in one word."

(2) In the second place, Uzziah's was a religious life. **He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.** He followed Amaziah in the better part of his life, and not in his idolatry. There is no better preparation for the eyes of the world than to be conscious ever of God's eyes upon us.

(3) Uzziah had a good guide, the prophet Zechariah, and he followed him as long as the prophet lived, just as his grandfather, Joash, followed Jehoiada. This Zechariah was not the writer of the prophecy included in our Bible, and we know nothing about him except the fine description here, that he **had understanding in the visions of God.** He

8. And the Am'mŏn-ītes [1] gave gifts to Uz-zī'ah: and his name [a] spread abroad *even* even to the entering in of E'gypt; for he strengthened *himself* exceedingly. waxed exceeding strong.

9. Moreover Uz-zī'ah built towers in Jerusalem at the [2] corner gate, and at the valley gate, and at the turning *of the wall*, and fortified them.

10. Also And he built towers in the desert, wilderness, and digged hewed out many wells: cisterns, for he had much cattle: both in the low country, lowland also, and in the plain: plains: *and he had* husbandmen *also*, and vine dressers vinedressers in the mountains: and in Car'mel: the fruitful fields: for he loved [b] husbandry.

11. Moreover Uz-zī'ah had an host army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account reckoning made by the hand of Je-ī'el the scribe and Mā-a-sē'iah the ruler, officer, under the hand of Hăn-a-nī'ah, one one of the king's captains.

[1] 2 Sam. 8 : 2; 2 Chron. 17 : 11.
[2] 2 Kings 14 : 13; Neh. 3 : 13; Zech. 14 : 10.

a Heb., *went*.
b Heb., *ground*.

possessed "that marvelous telescopic faculty that looks away beyond the visible into that which is unseen." — *Joseph Parker*. Next best to having it for one's self is following and heeding those that have it; but every one may have it for himself.

THE RISE OF THE PROPHETS. "In this and the next ten chapters we have the histories of Uzziah and ten more kings of Judah, in whose days prophesied the most of the prophets, both major and minor; to whose writings these eleven chapters lend not a little light, and are therefore diligently to be read and heeded." — *Trapp*. During or near Uzziah's reign prophesied Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah.

As a reward for honoring God, what triumphs did God give Uzziah? (1) "The Philistines were always unquiet neighbors of the Jews, and required from time to time to be severely chastised, and compelled, as it were, into good behavior." — *Rawlinson*. Uzziah, God helping him, captured their principal cities, broke down their walls, and occupied the subjugated territory with new towns in which Hebrews dwelt. (2) Having secured his western frontier, Uzziah next turned to the Arabian nomads in the deserts south of Judah, allies of the Philistines, and subdued them. (3) "The Minæan kingdom of South Arabia was still standing, and that it should have resented the interruption of its trade caused by the occupation of Eloth is not remarkable." — *Professor Paton*. This nation also (the Mehunims) Uzziah vanquished, thus completing his possession of Idumea.

One of the Harpers of the Tomb of Ramses II.

II. Uzziah's Great Prosperity. — Vs. 8–15. "The period of Uzziah and Jeroboam was the golden age of Israel. As a result of conquest and of commercial enterprise the accumulation of wealth was greater than had ever been known before. The rich lived in palaces of hewn stone and of ivory. They reposed on couches with damask coverings. They lay upon beds of ivory, and stretched themselves upon sofas. They ate lambs selected out of the flocks, and calves fattened in the stall. They sang to the accompaniment of harps songs that they thought as fine as those of David. They drank beakers of rare wine, and anointed themselves with precious ointments. This prosperity, however, was restricted to the upper classes. While the nobles flourished, the poor grew constantly poorer. The peasant proprietors were crowded out, and all the land came into the hands of a few great nobles. The free-born Israelites sank to the position of serfs. Oppression and injustice

12. The whole number of the chief heads of the fathers of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valour, were two thousand and six hundred.

13. And under their hand was a an trained army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

a Heb., *the power of an army.*

flourished; and it was clear to thoughtful men, such as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, that both kingdoms must soon perish." — *Paton.*

How was Uzziah's power among the nations made manifest? (1) **The Ammonites,** tribes living east of the Jordan, northeast of the Moabites, voluntarily paid tribute to him. They had formerly belonged to the kings of Israel, but had won their independence. Thus Uzziah's domains were protected upon the east as well as the west and south. (2) **His name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt,** the frontier of Egypt across the southern desert.

How did Uzziah strengthen himself at home? In three ways: (1) *By fortifications.* "The weak points of the walls of Jerusalem, which had suffered from the late inroad of Israel, he fortified." — *Stanley.* These points were "**the corner gate,** a gate probably at the northwestern angle of the city, where the north wall abutted on the Valley of Hinnom; **the valley gate,** midway in the western wall, corresponding to the modern gate of Jaffa; and **the turning of the wall,** a weak place in the defences of the eastern city (Neh. 3: 19), perhaps the southern point of the valley of the Tyropœon." — *Rawlinson.* "But his best fortification of Jerusalem was his close adherence to the worship of God, which if his father had not forsaken, the wall of Jerusalem had not been broken down." — *Matthew Henry.* Moreover (v. 10), Uzziah protected **the desert** (R.V., "the wilderness"), the wild pasture region west of the Dead Sea, by building **towers** in which the shepherds and herdsmen could take refuge in case of a sudden raid.

Interior Jaffa Gate.

(2) *By a strong army.* "Retaining or recalling David's institution of the *Gibborim,* or 'Mighty Men of Valor,' he raised the number from the 'Six Hundred' of David's time to two thousand six hundred, thus more than quadrupling this important body of picked troops." — *Rawlinson.* Under these were 307,500 soldiers, organized into **bands** (v. 11). "Probably each house formed a distinct troop." — *Ellicott.* "This expression,' by bands,' indicates that this army was used not for some great war, offensive or defensive, but for marauding or 'punitive' expeditions against neighboring tribes." — *Cambridge Bible.* A careful roll was kept of these troops (v. 11). "It had almost caused a rebellion when David inaugurated a military census of the kingdom, but under Uzziah such a measure had come to be a matter of course." — *Geikie.*

(3) *By arms and ammunition.* These included shields, spears, helmets, habergeons (coats of mail), bows, and (R.V.) stones for slinging. "Such stones needed to be carefully chosen, for they had to be smooth and of a suitable size. A water-course was the most suitable

14. And Uz-zī'ah prepared for them (throughout even for) all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and (habergeons, coats of mail,) and bows, and (slings *to cast* stones, stones for slinging,)

15. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the [a] (bulwarks, battlements,) to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

a Or, *corner towers.*

place for finding them (1 Sam. 17: 40.)" — *Cambridge Bible.* "In early times the slinger probably found his own stones, and the supply of them to his soldiers by Uzziah is meant to mark the completeness of his equipment." — *Speaker's Commentary.* "Thus in the Franco-German war Marshal Lebœuf declared the French army to be ready for the projected campaign down to the 'shoe-buckle.'" — *Pulpit Commentary.*

Besides, "for the first time in Hebrew history we find the king possessing elaborate, if primitive, artillery." — *New Century Bible.* The chronicler seems impressed by the marvel, and uses a triple phrase to describe it, literally, "engines engineered by the ingenious." "Some resembled the Roman *balistæ*, which hurled huge stones against the enemy; others corresponded to the Roman *catapultæ*, which shot forth darts and javelins." — *Rawlinson.* "They varied in power, like our cannon. Some of the balistæ used in sieges threw stones of *three hundred*, some of a hundred, some of fifty pounds weight, while those employed in the battlefield cast still smaller weights. The darts projected from the catapultæ varied in like manner from small beams to large arrows, and their range exceeded a quarter of a mile, or 450 yards. All these engines were constructed upon the principle of the sling, the bow, or the spring, the last being an elastic bar, bent back by a screw, or a cable of sinews, with a trigger to set it free, and contrived either to impel darts by its stroke, or to cast stones from a kind of spoon formed towards the summit of its spring. . . . In the siege of Jerusalem a man standing near Josephus had his head knocked off by a stone cast from a machine nearly three furlongs distant." — *Kitto.*

MODERN "IMPROVEMENTS" ON UZZIAH. This military outfit appears crude indeed when compared with our modern guns that will hurl more than a ton of steel for more than twenty miles, and that cost more than a thousand dollars to fire only once. They use smokeless powder, and now they can be made noiseless. On the sea the torpedo can be hurled four miles through the water against unsuspecting antagonists, and its explosion will blow up the largest battleship. Pneumatic guns, high explosives, the direction of torpedoes by wireless telegraphy, war balloons and aëroplanes, these would make war seem terrible indeed to the soldiers of Uzziah's day. But in all this so-called progress we have been relapsing into barbarism. Murder is not civilization, though on a vast scale and with the most ingenious machinery; and the only improvements we have made over Uzziah's warfare are in the Red Cross and the Hague Tribunal of Arbitration.

Helmet and Coat of Mail.

What did Uzziah seem to enjoy more than war? **He loved husbandry** (v. 10). "Blessed is that country whose agricultural laborers are more in number than its military men. Husbandmen are the very highest of all professions; they seem to come immediately after the Creator." — *Joseph Parker.* For his cattle Uzziah **digged many wells** (R.V., "hewed out many cisterns"). "Judæa depends largely for its water supply on reservoirs in which the rainfall is stored. These are generally cut in the natural rock, and covered at top with the exception of a small aperture." — *Speaker's Commentary.* Besides herdsmen Uzziah had farmers and vine-dressers, and his operations covered the Dead Sea wilderness, the mountainous uplands,

16. But [1] when he was strong, his heart was [2] lifted up (*to his destruction: for so that he did corruptly, and*) he (*transgressed trespassed*) against the LORD his God: (*and for he*) [3] went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17. And [4] Az-a-rī'ah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, (*that were that were*) valiant men:

18. (*And and*) they withstood Uz-zī'ah the king, and said unto him, (*It* [5] *appertaineth It pertaineth*) not unto thee, Uz-zī'ah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the [6] priests the sons of Aar'on, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither (*shall it be shall it be*) for thine honour from the LORD God.

[1] Deut. 32 : 15.	[3] 2 Kings 16 : 12.	[5] Num. 16 : 40.
[2] Deut. 8 : 14; 2 Chron. 25 : 19.	[4] 1 Chron. 6 : 10.	[6] Ex. 30 : 7, 8.

the lowlands along the Mediterranean, the plains or table lands east of the Jordan, and Carmel (R.V., "fruitful fields")—a term used to designate any especially fertile tract. "It speaks very highly indeed for a monarch of that period that he dug wells, that he had much cattle, that he encouraged the vine-dressers, that he 'loved husbandry.' These are things which in that age of the world were too often disregarded and even despised by men in high places, especially by monarchs. But it was on such things as these that national prosperity largely rested." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

From an Old Print.

Catapult for Casting Stones.

What was the secret of all Uzziah's prosperity? It is given in v. 15, **He was marvellously helped, till he was strong.** In this verse, and in vs. 7, 8, 13, 16, the chronicler seems to allude to the king's two names, Help of Jehovah and Strength of Jehovah. God is the source of all true prosperity.

ILLUSTRATION. Rowland Hill was given $500 to give to a poor minister. Thinking it was too much to give all at once, Mr. Hill sent him $25 in an envelope, with simply the written words, "More to follow." A few days later came another $25 with the same message, "More to follow"; and so on, until the astonished minister thought that an endless stream of blessings was coming his way. The $500 was exhausted at last, but there is no end to the blessings that God bestows upon his children; every one of them is labeled, "More to follow."

III. **Uzziah's Great Sin.** — Vs. 16–18. Prosperity has more perils than adversity, and pride is one of them. "It is the bright day that brings forth the adder, and that craves wary walking." — *Shakespeare.*

What sin did his pride lead Uzziah to commit? Dressed, according to Josephus, in priestly attire, and perhaps on the celebration of some high national feast, Uzziah presumed to enter the Holy Place, which it was death for any but a priest to enter, and to offer incense upon the sacred altar. "Uzziah appears to have desired to become supreme pontiff as well as king, and to exercise the same dual functions as the Egyptian Pharaohs were wont to do." — *Ellicott.* "He had to disregard the direct command of Jehovah that the priests alone should burn incense on his altar; he had to despise the history of his people, to defy the holy name by which he himself was called." — *Mackennal.* Thus "a reign of fifty-two years was spoiled in an hour." — *Pulpit Commentary.*

19. Then Uz-zī'ah was wroth, and (had) a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, [1] the leprosy (even rose up) in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, (from) beside the (incense) altar. (of incense.)

20. And Az-a-rī'ah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he (was) leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out (quickly) from thence; yea, himself [2] hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

21. [3] And Uz-zī'ah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a [4a] several house, (being) a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jō'tham his son (was) over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

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[1] Num. 12 : 10; 2 Kings 5 : 27.
[2] Esth. 6 : 12.
[3] 2 Kings 15 : 5.
[4] Lev. 13 : 46.
a Or, *lazar house.*

What protest was made? Azariah, the high priest (v. 20), a man of the same name as the king, withstood his royal master with eighty priests as bold as himself. "Uzziah had no doubt entered the Temple with a considerable retinue, and it was possible that he might resist the high priest's attempt to expel him." — *Speaker's Commentary.* It was one of the most courageous protests ever made.

ILLUSTRATION. The Roman Emperor Theodosius slew seven thousand citizens of Thessalonica because certain of his judges had been killed in that city. When the emperor returned to Milan and would have entered the assembly of Christians according to his custom, Bishop Ambrose forbade him to do so, excommunicated him, and bade him spend his time in sorrow and repentance till God might forgive his great sin. The emperor meekly withdrew, and spent eight months in weeping before Ambrose restored him to Christian fellowship.

Prof. Austin Phelps parallels Uzziah's sin with the following modern forms of presumption in the worship of God: "Sleeping in God's house; neglecting to participate in divine worship when present in God's house; frequenting the house of God as a place of entertainment merely; concealing from ourselves hidden sin under cover of scrupulous devotion; offering to God services in which any essential truth of God's being is denied or ignored." Many are to-day guilty of Uzziah's sin that would be shocked to realize it.

IV. **Uzziah's Righteous Punishment.** — Vs. 19–23. ***How did the king receive the rebuke?*** He burst into a towering rage. "Henry II.'s feelings towards Becket must have been mild compared to those of Uzziah towards Azariah, who, if the king could have had his way, would doubtless have shared the fate of Zechariah the son of Jehoiada." — *Expositor's Bible.*

What terrible punishment came to Uzziah? The infliction of that most loathsome, incurable disease, leprosy. Thus Miriam had been punished, and Gehazi. According to Josephus, it was at this very moment that the famous earthquake of Uzziah's reign (Amos 1 : 1) occurred. "The solid building of the Temple rocked, its roof opened, the darkness of its inner recess was suddenly lighted up by the full blaze of the sun; and as the king looked up towards it, a leprous disfigurement mounted into his face."—*Stanley.* In horror and dismay, perhaps fearing the death that came in olden days upon the impious Korah and his company, Uzziah did not wait for the priests to drive him from the Temple, but made all haste to go from the presence of the Lord whom he had so offended. "Hope concerning Uzziah is given in the record of his hasting to go out of the Temple. A man is not altogether lost while he can feel shame." — *Mackennal.*

What became of Uzziah? For the rest of his life he lived in **a several** or separate **house.** "It was perhaps some place in the country to which the king confined himself after the disease had broken out upon him." — *Cambridge Bible.* "We are not told whether during his incarceration he repented of the sin that he had committed; but we may perhaps assume that he did so, since he certainly left behind him the character of a good, rather than a wicked, king. (See 2 Kings 15: 3, 34; 2 Chron. 26: 4; 27: 2.)" — *Rawlinson.* He was buried in the royal burying-field, but not in the royal sepulchres themselves, for he would have polluted them.

V. **Two Other Kings Contrasted.** — 2 Chronicles 27, 28. Our lesson includes the stories of two other kings of Judah, and a greater contrast could hardly be imagined than between Jotham the son of Uzziah and Ahaz the son of Jotham. Both were young men when they came to the throne, and both reigned for sixteen years; but there the likeness stops.

"Jotham shares with Solomon the distinguished honor of being a king of whom no evil is recorded either in Kings or Chronicles, and who died in prosperity, at peace with Jehovah." — *Expositor's Bible.* He followed the good in Uzziah and not the evil, strengthened Jerusalem, built cities and forts, conquered his enemies and took tribute from them. "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways *before the Lord his God.*"

ILLUSTRATION. "The Master's eye makes diligent servants. How schoolboys bend themselves over their slates and quicken their effort when the teacher is walking behind the benches! And how a gang of idle laborers will buckle to the spade when the overseer appears upon the field! If we realized, as we should do, the presence in all our little daily life of that great, sovereign Lord, there would be less skulking, less superficially performed tasks, more of our strength cast into all our work." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

Ahaz, on the contrary, plunged into idolatry, scouted the remonstrances of Isaiah, failed against Israel, failed against Syria, called in the help of Assyria, and degraded his kingdom into a mere tributary to his Assyrian allies. All the Temple treasures were melted up to pay the Assyrian tribute, and the Temple itself was shut up. The glory of Judah under Uzziah was dragged in the dust by this idolater.

THE PERIL OF PRIDE, AND HOW TO AVOID IT.

The story of Ahaz reinforces the warning that comes to us from the story of Uzziah. The pride of Ahaz was pride of opinion; that of Uzziah was pride in accomplishment. Pride may spring from good looks, fine clothes, plenty of money, a keen intellect, distinguished social position. A boy may be vain of his ball-playing and a girl of her white hands. Whatever may be the source of it, pride is always a terrible danger.

1. It alienates from us the sympathy and affection of others. No one loves a proud person.

2. It blinds our eyes to our real condition. We think we are stronger or brighter or better than we are.

3. It shuts us away from the sources of wisdom and strength, because we do not feel that we need strength or wisdom. The most learned teacher cannot teach a self-sufficient scholar, who thinks that he "knows it all."

4. Worst of all, it shuts us away from God. Only those that will humble themselves and become like little children can enter his kingdom. The meek inherit the earth, and the poor in spirit inherit heaven.

Pride is indeed like a leprosy. It makes us hideous to look upon, though all the while we think we are beautiful. It causes our spiritual body to decay and portions of it to drop off, though all the while we think we are increasing. It isolates us from human companionship, though all the while we think that others are not good enough to associate with us. Oh, let us be on our guard against this leprosy-sin of Uzziah's!

And if we suspect that we are harboring pride, let us remember that there is One who can cure it, and One only. It is He who bade the leper be clean, and lo! his flesh became sound and sweet as in childhood, and the plague had passed from him forever.

LESSON VII. — May 14.

ISAIAH'S VISION AND CALL TO SERVICE. (HOME MISSIONARY LESSON.) — Isaiah 6.

COMMIT vs. 6–8. READ Isaiah 2–4.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*** — ISA. 6: 8.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read Isaiah 2–4, and 6.

2. Compare Isaiah's vision of God with that of Moses and the elders, Ex. 24: 10; Micaiah, 1 Kings 22: 19; Amos 9: 1; Ezek. 1: 26–28; Dan. 7: 9, 10; Rev. 1: 12–18.

3. Compare this commissioning of Isaiah with that of Moses, Exodus 3, 4; Joshua, Josh. 1: 1–9; Gideon, Judg. 6: 12–24; Jeremiah, Jer. 1: 4–10; Ezekiel, Ezekiel 2, 3; Peter, Luke 5: 4–10; Paul, Acts 9: 1–22.

4. On the Hebrew belief about the peril of seeing God see Ex. 33: 20–23; 24: 11; Judg. 6: 22; 13: 22; Gen. 32: 30.

5. With the picture of the seraphim compare the "living creatures" of Ezek. 1: 5–11.

6. In connection with v. 3 read the cry of the four beasts, Rev. 4: 8.

7. On smoke as a symbol of the divine presence see Ex. 19: 9, 18; 1 Kings 8: 10, 11.

8. On fire as a symbol of purification see Mal. 3: 2; Matt. 3: 11.

9. With vs. 9, 10 compare Ezek. 18: 23; 1 Tim. 2: 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.

10. See the quotations of vs. 9, 10 in the New Testament, Matt. 13: 14, 15; Mark 4: 12; John 12: 40; Acts 28: 26, 27.

11. For Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant see Isa. 4: 3; 10: 20, 21, and the name of his son, Isa. 7: 3.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the scholars to look up Isaiah in the Bible dictionaries and the encyclopædias and report all they can find about him. Have them compare with this chapter the openings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Let them find comparisons in the Revelation, and the quotations of vs. 9, 10 in the New Testament. Appoint three to take the parts of the speakers of the chapter and read it as a dialogue, after practice, omitting the narrative portions.

Manual Work. — Have the scholars make a chart showing in parallel columns, at the proper time intervals, the kings of Judah and of Israel during the time of Isaiah.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — Isaiah the Man. The Book Isaiah Wrote. Visions of Jehovah in the Bible. What Are Seraphs? Purity and Power. The Fire Symbol in the Bible. Bible "Here Am I's." The Doctrine of the Remnant.

Learn by Heart. — Vs. 6–8; Isa. 60: 1; Jer. 1: 6–9.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The year when King Uzziah died, which was (Beecher) B.C. 755, or (Hastings) B.C. 749.

Place. — The Temple in Jerusalem.

Kings. — In Israel, Menahem; in Assyria, Asshur-daan III.

Prophets. — Hosea, Micah.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Isaiah, especially *The Expositor's Bible*, by George Adam Smith; Ellicott; *The Speaker's Bible; Cambridge Bible; New Century Bible;* Dummelow; *Pulpit Commentary*. On Isaiah: Delitzsch, Mitchell, Cheyne, Driver (*Men of the Bible*), Whyte (*Bible Characters*), Matheson (*Representative Men of the Bible*), Sayce (*The Times of Isaiah*), Townsend (*Men of the Old Testament*), Pidge (*The Prophetical Books of the Old Testament*), Bennett and Adeney (*A Biblical Introduction*), W. Robertson Smith (*The Prophets of Israel*), Spence (*Book by Book*), Geikie (*Old Testament Characters*), Maclaren (*Expositions*), Wharton (*Famous Men of the Old Testament*). A valuable article by Thomson in *The Expositor*, First Series, Vol. XI. *In the Days of Isaiah*, a graphic story by Abraham Mappu. Sermons by Trench (*Sermons New and Old*), Spurgeon (Vol. III.), Allon (*Contemporary Pulpit*, First Series, Vol. IX.), Westcott (*Peterborough Sermons*), Bancroft (*The Anthem Angelic*), Phillips Brooks (*The Light of the World*), Elmslie (*Memoir and Sermons*). The hymn, "Holy, holy, holy." Æschylus, *Agamemnon* 370–386.

The Christian's Work for His Home Land, after the Example of Isaiah.

Introduction. — This is a home-missionary lesson. We are asked to read Isaiah 2–4. ***What home-missionary thoughts are to be found there?*** Those glowing sentences are in many particulars faithful pictures of our wealthy modern nations. There are the unexampled movement of immigration (Isa. 2: 2), the aping of evil customs from other lands (Isa. 2: 6), the vast wealth (Isa. 2: 7), the mammon-worship (Isa. 2: 8), the pride (Isa. 2: 11), the social wrongs and oppressions (Isa. 3: 5), the misgovernment (Isa. 3: 14), the devotion to fashion and luxury (Isa. 3: 16), and in it all a nucleus of nobility that will bring about the ultimate triumph of godliness (Isa. 4: 3). There is as great need that we should work for our country as that Isaiah should work for his; and, though we are so much

inferior to Isaiah, yet God calls us in essentially the same way to the same great service. Let us study the prophet's call, with this outline:

I. THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.
II. THE PROPHET ISAIAH.
III. THE PROPHET'S VISION (vs. 1–4).
IV. THE PROPHET'S PURIFICATION (vs. 5–7).
V. THE PROPHET'S CALL AND RESPONSE (v. 8).
VI. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE AND HOPE (vs. 9–13).
HOME-MISSION MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

I. The Book of Isaiah.—***What are the major prophets?*** Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, so-called not necessarily because of their greater importance, but because of the greater length of their writings than those of the minor prophets.

What is the most important characteristic of Isaiah's writings? Their universal excellence. "Each of the other prophets has some special characteristic or characteristics, but Isaiah seems to be a universal genius. All kinds of writing appear to be equally easy to him. He is equally at home in pathos and scorn; he can paint natural scenery with ravishing beauty, or sing an ode of triumph with ravishing power. He is lyrical and dramatic. In depth and breadth of sympathy he is unrivaled."—*Pidge.* "Even in literary form the world has produced nothing greater than Isaiah. . . . Nowhere else in the literature of the world have so many colossally great ideas been brought together within the limits of a single work."—*Moulton.* "As a master of style Isaiah is supreme among the prophets; the only one with whom he can be compared being his predecessor Amos."—*Cambridge Bible.*

What are some of the particular excellences of Isaiah's writings? "The literary quality most conspicuous in Isaiah is the wealth and brilliancy of his imagination. No other Old Testament writer has the same power of picturesque and graphic description."—*Cambridge Bible.* "There is no other Hebrew author who furnishes the reader with so many quotable sentences. One can imagine the people of Jerusalem stopping one another on the street, to tell and hear the latest from the prophet. This, of course, was precisely what he desired and intended."—*Professor H. G. Mitchell.* "The consummation of art in artlessness is fully attained by Isaiah."—*New Century Bible.* "Isaiah was a humorist and satirist in the truest sense of the word. This is evident from his vivid, quaint description of the strange manufacture of idols and images of worship, from his curious and vivid picture of female luxury and fashion in his day."—*Dean Spence.*

How may the book of Isaiah be divided? "Very roughly, into three great divisions: (1) The book of warnings, denunciation, and woe (chapters 1–35). (2) The historical episode of the conversion of Israel under Hezekiah (chapters 36–39). (3) The Book of Consolation, written during the happier days of Hezekiah—the outcome of what Isaiah saw in vision and trance concerning the coming Redeemer and the future of the Israel of God (chapters 40–66)."—*Dean Spence.*

What are the reasons of those that believe only part of the book to have been written by Isaiah? They hold that chapters 40–66, with many portions of what precedes, were written by one or more prophets during the exile or after the return. These chapters have no heading ascribing them to Isaiah. They introduce the name of Cyrus, who lived two centuries after Isaiah. They presuppose the historical situation of the exile. They present a different and more advanced theology than Isaiah's. The style and language are different from Isaiah's. It is believed by these scholars that many anonymous prophecies came to be attached to the writings of the supreme prophet, Isaiah, just as all psalms came to be called "of David," and all proverbs "of Solomon."

What are the reasons of those that believe the whole book to have been written by Isaiah? The unbroken testimony of history, from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament made 285–150 B.C., down to the close of the eighteenth century. With the single exception of Aben Ezra, a Jewish writer of the twelfth century, every one has believed the entire book to have been written by Isaiah. Nine times in the New Testament disputed portions of Isaiah are quoted as from the great prophet (Matt. 3: 3; 8: 17; 12: 17; Luke 3: 4; 4: 17; John 1: 23; 12: 38; Acts 8: 28; Rom. 10: 16–20). Differences in language and style might be expected in a series of prophecies covering so long a period and

uttered under circumstances so varied. Note the differences in style between the early and later work of Tennyson, Carlyle, Goethe, Milton, and Shakespeare. "On the other hand, in all the various sections of Isaiah we find the same thoughts running through the writings, the same imagery adopted, the same words used, the same metaphors employed." — *Spence.* "There is scarcely an event connected with the exile, to which the author refers, but was known to the Israelites in the time of Isaiah." — *Prof. John D. Davis.* "Is it not incredible that we should have here, blended in a single volume, two writers, both of them far surpassing every other Old Testament writer in grandeur and sublimity of style and elevation and purity of thought, and that one of these, perhaps the greater of the two, should have completely disappeared from even the knowledge of his countrymen? Does not this supposition present a more difficult problem than Isaiah's authorship of those doubtful chapters?" — *Pidge.*

Even if a second Isaiah were proved, what must remain our attitude toward the book? "Chapter 53, as a prophecy of Jesus Christ, is surely as great a marvel if you date it from the exile as if you date it from the age of Isaiah." — *Prof. George Adam Smith.* We simply should have two or more splendid prophets instead of one.

II. **The Prophet Isaiah.** — ***What do we know about Isaiah as a historical person?*** *His name* means "Jehovah is salvation," and is therefore synonymous with Joshua and Jesus.

His father was Amoz ("strong"), not to be confounded with Amos, the prophet.

His wife is termed "the prophetess." "From this we must infer that she also, like her husband, was endowed with the gift of prophecy." — *Sayce.*

His sons were named Maher-shalal-hashbaz, "Hasten booty, speed spoil," in allusion to the national ruin foretold by Isaiah, and Shear-jashub, "A remnant shall return," in allusion to the prophet's great teaching that the godly portion of his people should be preserved.

His social station was high, as is shown by his intimacy with the kings, Jotham and Hezekiah. He was a man of influence, the foremost citizen of Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh.

His death, according to tradition, was brought about by Manasseh because the prophet, then about ninety years old, refused to obey the king's idolatrous ordinances. The aged hero is said to have been placed between two planks and sawn asunder, — a martyrdom to which there is an allusion in Heb. 11:37. "Like Shakespeare, Isaiah has left behind him the briefest facts of his life, yet he fills a place in Scripture almost analogous to that filled by the poet of the Avon in our English literature." — *W. J. Townsend, D.D.*

What was Isaiah's life work? "The events of his time may be summed up in two momentous occurrences. The *first* was the advance of the Assyrians upon the small states of Syria and Palestine, paralyzing their national consciousness, and with this also their national religions. Judah was not destroyed like Samaria, but its independence was lost, and it was the prophet's chief political task to enable his country to adjust itself to the new conditions. As a politician Isaiah's maxim was 'no politics.' He strongly dissuaded Ahaz from entangling himself with Assyria, but when his advice was disregarded and Judah became subject to Assyria he resisted with equal strenuousness all attempts to throw off the Assyrian yoke.

"The *second* occurrence was the fall of Samaria, by which the mission of united Israel became the heritage of Judah alone." — *Temple Bible.* During all these troublous times Isaiah was the leading statesman of his country. "In every department of national life, in every section of social and religious existence, his voice was heard and his personality felt." — *Professor Elmslie.* "The possibilities of the prophetic office are nowhere more splendidly illustrated than in the career of

Isaiah.
From Sargent's Frieze of the Prophets in the Boston Public Library.

1. In the year that [1] king Uz-zī'ah died I [2] saw [also] the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and [a] his train filled the temple.

2. Above [it] stood the [seraphims: seraphim:] each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and [3] with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3. And [b] one cried unto another, and said, [4] Holy, holy, holy, [is] the LORD of hosts: [c 5] the whole earth [is] full of his glory.

4. And the [posts foundations] of the [door thresholds] were moved at the voice of him that cried, and [6] the house was filled with smoke.

[1] 2 Kings 15: 7.
[2] 1 Kings 22: 19; John 12: 41.
[3] Ezek. 1: 11.
[4] Rev. 4: 8.
[5] Psa. 72: 19.
[6] Ex. 40: 34.
a Or, *its skirts.*
b Heb., *this cried to this.*
c Heb., *the fulness of the whole earth is his glory.*

Isaiah."— *Cambridge Bible.* "After David, Isaiah is probably the most conspicuous personage in the history of Israel." — *Dean Spence.*

III. **The Prophet's Vision.** — Vs. 1–4. "When a man gives a record of his life he usually begins by telling when and where he was born. Isaiah begins by telling where he was 'born again.'" — *George Matheson.* "This chapter records the first mighty sweep of inspiration that came over Isaiah's soul, and bound him to God as his witness and accredited messenger for the rest of his lifetime." — *Thomson.* It is the only vision recorded in Isaiah. "The opening words remind us of the vision of Micaiah (1 Kings 22: 19), and we should compare the visions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel which inaugurated their prophetic activity." — *Dummelow.* "We may easily understand the men of his day saying to Isaiah, 'What right have you to talk to us thus?' Imagine the effect of his replying, 'In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord,' etc." — *W. W. White, Ph.D.* "The chapter stands unrivaled in the Old Testament both for grandeur of conception and the majestic simplicity of its style." — *Cambridge Bible.*

When did Isaiah see his vision? **In the year that king Uzziah died.** "What would he say here but this, 'In the year when the crowned monarch of the earth went down into the dust and darkness of the tomb, and all the pomp and pageantry which had surrounded him for a little while dissolved and disappeared, I saw another King, even the King immortal, sitting upon his throne, which is for ever and ever'?" — *Trench.*

What was the vision? Isaiah saw the Holy Place of the Temple, enlarged and glorified, the veil drawn aside, a lofty throne taking the place of the ark, and upon it Adonai, the Sovereign of the universe, his train, the skirts of his garments of light and glory, so filling the Temple that no human priest could minister there.

"No face; only the sight
Of a sweepy garment vast and white
With a hem that I could recognize."
— *Robert Browning's "Christmas Eve."*

"We cannot contemplate the spectacle which Isaiah describes without feeling our eyes grow dazzled and our hearts tremble." — *Bishop Westcott.* "Henceforth Isaiah could never doubt the being and the might of God." — *Elmslie.*

How was the Deity attended? By a throng of seraphim standing erect before him (so Cheyne translates), ready for any duty. This is the only mention of seraphim in the Bible. "Their presence seems intended to symbolize the adoration unceasingly due from the highest of created beings to the Creator." — *Driver.* They are thought of as gigantic flaming beings, probably in the form of men.

What is the meaning of the six wings of each seraph? The first pair indicate reverence, hiding from their eyes the vision of Jehovah. The second pair, covering not only the feet but the loins also (so Cheyne translates it accurately), signify self-forgetfulness. The third pair, upon which the seraph was poised (*all* the wings were used when the seraph went on an errand), signify active service.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "It is noticeable that the monuments of Persepolis represent the Amshashpands (or ministers of God) as having six wings, two of which cover the feet." — *Ellicott.*

"Mercury, the fabled messenger of the gods of Greece, was represented as having wings on his feet; but Mercury would be a snail in comparison with a modern express train when placed beside one of these six-winged seraphim of Jehovah." — *William Henry Bancroft, D.D.*

5. [1] Then said I, Woe [to] me! for I am [a] undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6. Then flew one of the [seraphims] seraphim unto me, having a [b] live coal in his hand, [which] which he had taken with the tongs from off [2] the altar:

7. [And] and he [3] laid it upon touched my mouth, [with it,] with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

[1] Ex. 4: 10; Jer. 1: 6.
[2] Rev. 8: 3.
[3] Jer. 1: 9.
[a] Heb., *cut off*.
[b] Or, *a hot stone*.

What was the song of the seraphim? One chorus cried (Moulton), "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts!" Then the other chorus would answer, "The fulness of the whole earth is his glory!" (Revised version margin.) "They seem to be arranged in two rows, at Jehovah's right and left (compare 1 Kings 22: 19), for their praises are responsive."— *Thomson.* "The vision reaches its highest point in the cry, Holy, holy, holy." — *Maurice.* "The threefold repetition denotes emphasis or intensity (Jer. 7: 4). In the light of later revelation Christians have not unnaturally seen here a foreshadowing of the Holy Trinity. Compare Rev. 4: 8." — *Dummelow.*

What was the effect of the song of the seraphim? The foundations of the thresholds (Revised Version) were shaken by the power of the singing. "A symbol this of the constant effects of the proclamation of truth. At every new announcement of it earthly things that seem most solid shake, and many of them totter and fall and disappear. (2 Cor. 10: 4; Heb. 12: 26–28.)" — *Homiletic Commentary.*

Why was the house filled with smoke? Some think it the smoke of the incense, a part of the adoration of the seraphim; others that it was a token of the divine anger that finds vent in vs. 9–12, while Cheyne holds it to have been an indication of the divine displeasure against the unpurified man who had penetrated into the sanctuary.

What should be the effect of Isaiah's wonderful vision upon us? "That sight of God — the living, holy, loving God — made Isaiah a prophet. Preachers and teachers of to-day, if we are to be prophets, we need just such a sight of God." — *Professor Elmslie.* John declared that Isaiah's vision was a vision of Christ (John 12: 41). The vision of a holy Saviour should fill us, as it filled Isaiah, with a longing for a holy people to answer to it, a glorified church and nation. The vision is a call to home-mission work.

"Oh, dull of heart! Enclosed doth lie
In each 'Come, Lord,' a 'Here am I.'" — *Trench.*

IV. **The Prophet's Purification.** — Vs. 5-7. ***Why was Isaiah filled with fear at the vision?*** Because it was a vision of God, and the Hebrews believed that no one could see God and live. "So Moses 'hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God' (Ex. 3: 6). So Job 'abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes' (Job 42: 6). So Peter fell down at his Lord's feet, and cried, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord' (Luke 5: 8)." — *Ellicott.* Besides, "Isaiah loved God, and instinctively he prepared to join his voice to the seraphs' chant, but ere the harmony could pass his lips he caught his breath and was dumb. A horrible sense of uncleanness had seized him." — *Elmslie.*

ILLUSTRATIONS. "It was as if a deformed creature had received the present of a looking-glass and for the first time beheld his misshapenness." — *Matheson.*

"Even the heathen could apprehend something of this truth. If Jupiter comes to Semele arrayed in the glories of deity, she perishes, consumed to ashes." — *Trench.*

"Like some search-light flung from a ship over the darkling waters, revealing the dark doings of the enemy away out yonder in the night, the thought of God and his holiness streaming in upon a man's soul is sure to disclose the heaving waters and the skulking foes that are busy in the dark." — *Maclaren.*

"The X-rays reveal the hidden diseases or imperfections of the material framework of man; but when he is placed within the display of the divine glory the spiritual evils stand out in ghastly distinctness." — *Townsend.*

How was the prophet's sinfulness taken away? One of the bright seraphs, "glowing as with fire, and with wings like the lightning-flash" (*Ellicott*), took a hot stone (R.V. margin) with tongs from the altar and touched Isaiah's lips with it in token of purification. The hot stone "is a stone kept in all ancient Oriental households as a means of applying

8. Also / And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for [1] us? Then said I. / I said. [a] Here am / am I; send me.

9. And he said, Go, and tell this people, [2] Hear ye [b] indeed, but understand not; and see ye [b] indeed, but perceive not.

10. Make [3] the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; [4] lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, / turn again, and be healed.

11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, [5] Until [the] cities be wasted / waste without inhabitant, and [the] houses without man, and the land be / become [c] utterly desolate, / waste.

1 Gen. 1 : 26.
2 Isa. 43 : 8; Matt. 13 : 14; Mark 4 : 12; Luke 8 : 10; John 12 : 40.
3 Psa. 119 : 70; Isa. 63 : 17.
4 Jer. 5 : 21.
5 Mic. 3 : 12.
a Heb., *Behold me.*
b Or, *continually.*
c Heb., *desolate with desolation.*

heat to household purposes. In order to bake cakes (compare 1 Kings 19: 6, R.V. margin), or to roast flesh, the stone was first heated in the fire, and the wet dough or the flesh spread out upon it, the stones as they grew cold being exchanged for hot ones fresh from the fire. To boil milk, the hot stone was plunged into it when contained in the leathern skin that served alike as cauldron and pitcher." — *Thomson.*

ILLUSTRATION. The devout Bernard exclaimed, "Had the prophet need of a coal! Oh, then, grant for me a whole globe of fire, to purge away my filthiness, and make me a fit messenger to this people!" The more deeply we feel the need of our country for strong and holy men and women to make it the country it should be, the more deeply do we feel our own need for purification, that we may be fit for the great task of home missions.

V. **The Prophet's Call and Response.** — V. 8. ***Why does Jehovah seek for a man to go on his errands, when he has the winged seraphs?*** Because men can reach men better than angels can. "Only once did God choose a completely sinless preacher. Always, but that once, God has chosen sinful men; and, not seldom, the most sinful of men he could get to speak to their fellow-men about sin and salvation." — *Alexander Whyte, D.D.*

Why does Jehovah use "I" and "us," singular and plural, in the same sentence? Partly because, "here as elsewhere (1 Kings 22: 19; Job 1: 6; 2: 1; and perhaps Gen. 1: 26; 11: 7), Jehovah is represented as a king in council. Christian thought has, however, scarcely erred in believing that the words were as a dim foreshadowing of the truth of a plurality within the Unity." — *Ellicott.*

Why was Isaiah so quick to offer himself as the messenger? Because he felt himself, with his sin removed, both fit and able for service, and wanted to show his gratitude for what had been done for him. "There is no curious inquiry about the nature of the service. The man becomes as winged as the seraph." — *A. Mursell.*

What is the lesson for us? "You, my sons, are called to be prophets and evangelists. You must see God, you must hear God for yourselves."—*Bishop Westcott.* "Your mission, it may be humble, or it may be high; the adorning the doctrine of Christ in some lowliest estate, or the adorning of it in some highest, and before kings; the teaching of some little child, or the helping to cast down some huge iniquity which darkens half a world."—*Dean Trench.* Especially, to every citizen comes the call to home-missionary work. "'Too busy!' A man might as well say, 'I am too busy to pay my note at the bank, or to provide food for my household.' No moral obligation can outrank our duty to the commonwealth." — *Gladden.* "The world can be saved if the church does not save it. The question is, Can the church be saved unless it is doing all in its power to save the world?" — *Graham Taylor.*

VI. **The Prophet's Message and Hope.** — Vs. 9-13. This important passage is quoted by Christ, John, and Paul as illustrating the hard hearts of those to whom they spoke.

What message was Isaiah bidden to give to his nation? "A sadder commission was never given to a man." — *Maurice.* He was to say to them (Cheyne's translation), "Hear on, but understand not! See on, but perceive not!" He was to make the hearts of his people fat ("gross," as Professor Mitchell translates it), and was to seal their eyes,

12. [1] And and the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land.

13. But yet in it *shall be* And if there be yet a tenth· and *it* in it, it shall return, and shall again be eaten: up: as a teil tree, terebinth, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, stock remaineth, when they cast *their leaves: so* are felled; so [2] the holy seed *shall be* is the substance stock thereof.

[1] 2 Kings 25: 21. [2] Ezra 9: 2; Rom. 11: 5.

besmearing them with some substance that would close the lids tightly, — a barbarous Eastern punishment. A son of the Great Mogul was once thus punished by his father.

> "For when we in our viciousness grow hard,
> Oh, misery on't, the wise gods seal our eyes."
> — *Shakespeare.*

But does God prevent any one from repenting and being saved? Indeed not! He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3: 9). By a vivid form of speech, the prophesied result of Isaiah's preaching is here put for the purpose of it. Thus God is said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart, but only after Pharaoh had repeatedly hardened his own heart.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "It was like digging a grave for a man in his own sight, after you have failed to convince him by word that his course of conduct must end in death." — *Thomson.*

Thus a teacher might try to arouse a lazy pupil by saying to him, "You are hopeless; you will certainly fail in the examination."

What was Isaiah's despairing cry? **Lord, how long?** "Either, 'How long am I to continue this preaching?' or, 'How long is this blindness and callousness of the people to continue?'" — *Pulpit Commentary.*

What was Jehovah's terrible reply? In George Adam Smith's translation:

> *Until cities fall into ruin without an inhabitant,*
> *And houses without a man,*
> *And the land be left desolately waste,*
> *And Jehovah have removed man far away,*
> *And great be the desert in the midst of the land;*
> *And still if there be a tenth in it,*
> *Even it shall be again for consuming.*
> *Like the terebinth, and like the oak,*
> *Whose stock when they are felled remaineth in them,*
> *The holy seed shall be its stock.*

How was this prophecy fulfilled? "The invasion of Judah by Rezin and Pekah, seventeen years after this; her deep humiliation by Sennacherib forty-six years after this; and the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, were all fulfilments of this prophecy. We are quite justified in seeing in the repeated 'consumings' of the tithe that returned, under the Syrian kings, and later under the Romans, on to the fall of Jerusalem and of the nation, but a still more distant succession of fulfilments." — *Thomson.* "As silver is purified by repeated smeltings, so the land of Judah must pass, not once, but again and again through the fire." — *W. Robertson Smith, LL.D.*

What was Isaiah's great teaching of "the remnant"? That as when a terebinth (a Palestine tree about seventeen feet high) is cut down, new branches will shoot up from the stump, so life will remain in God's people even in their apparent ruin, and this life will spring up to new beauty and power. This teaching, which runs all through Isaiah, is the message of hope, doubly effective since the Saviour came, with which all missionaries approach the wretched and vile of the human race.

ILLUSTRATIONS. "Do you think David was not a child of God, even when he sinned? Oh, horrid and awful was the crime! yet his substance was in him when he lost his leaves." — *Spurgeon.*

"God sees the saint in the sinner, the wheat in the tare, Paul the preacher of the faith in Saul the persecutor of the faith, Israel a prince with God in Jacob the trickster and the supplanter, Matthew the apostle in Levi the publican, a woman that should love much in a woman sinning much." — *Trench.*

"Were you to take away the holy men of the nation, throw down its churches, and disperse its religious assemblies, were ministers of God's truth and Sabbath-school teachers to be silenced, our individual Christian men, our godly senators and merchants, our pious artisans and laborers to disappear from their separate spheres of life, why, the very substance of the nation would be destroyed." — *Henry Allon, D.D.*

How does this marvelous chapter apply to our nation and to home missions? It contains a message of doom and a message of hope and promise. Which shall it be for our nation? The former, if Christians are heedless of the great work before them, to evangelize the masses of our fellow-countrymen that do not know Christ. The latter, if home missions are earnestly promoted, in the spirit and power of our Lord.

HOME-MISSIONARY MOTIVES AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

One of the chief problems of home missions is the large number of foreign immigrants. When the United States is prosperous more than a million of these come to our shores every year, and about three-fourths of them remain. "Juvenal complained that Syrian Orontes had flowed into the Tiber, and brought with it its language and morals. In like manner, our American waters have been fouled by many an Orontes of the Old World." — *Josiah Strong.* The large majority of present-day immigrants come from Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, the European lands that are farthest removed from ours in civilization and religion, since they are Catholic. In proportion to their numbers, the foreigners in the United States furnish two and one-half times as many criminals as the natives. Illiteracy among the foreigners is three times as great as among the native whites, and pauperism also is three times as prevalent. Europe alone could send us 3,000,000 immigrants every year indefinitely, while its own population still increased.

Our cities furnish another problem for the home missionary. In 1800 less than four per cent of the people in the United States lived in cities; in 1900, one-third of them, and the proportion is constantly and irresistibly increasing. The foreign elements gravitate thither. Cities are hot-beds of crime. Ignorance and pauperism have their homes there. Political misrule of our cities is the one conspicuous failure of our American civilization.

Still another vast home-mission problem is the more than nine millions of negroes in the United States, a population rapidly growing, while Christian forces have as yet made very little headway against their ignorance, superstition, and immorality.

Our frontier constitutes another enormous home-mission problem, — the unreached companies of lumbermen and miners and sailors, and especially the great southwest and northwest, where the rapid progress of settlement is transforming the wilderness in a day to thriving and well populated communities. The saloon and gambling house and worse resorts follow the settler far more rapidly than the Christian church with its purifying influences.

But against these forces and tendencies of evil we have more than Isaiah's "remnant" at work. Home missionaries meet the immigrant at Ellis Island and give him a Bible and a word of kindly advice. The American Bible Society sends its colporteurs into the most neglected regions. The American Sunday School Union organizes Sunday schools wherever a few can be brought together, and from these schools many churches spring. Our churches give to home missions more than ten million dollars every year, and the denominational home-mission boards are pushing aggressively into all the needy territory. The mission schools among the negroes, the Indians, and the Mountain Whites, such schools as Hampton and Tuskeegee, the allotting of land in severalty to the Indians and thus transforming them into American citizens, the powerful influence of the public schools in forming the characters of immigrants' children for the better, the rescue missions in the cities, — all these are bright spots in the home-mission field.

What is needed, in order to win our land for Christ, is only that every Christian, man and woman, boy or girl, should have the spirit of Isaiah: be ready to spend money, time, and strength in this great cause, and whenever our Master gives the home-missionary summons, be eager to answer as Isaiah answered,

Here am I; send me.

LESSON VIII. — May 21.

SONG OF THE VINEYARD. (TEMPERANCE LESSON.)

Isaiah 5: 1–12.

COMMIT v. 11. READ chapters 5 and 28.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink.* — ISA. 5: 22.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read Isaiah 5 and 28.
2. With the parable of the vineyard compare Christ's parable, Matt. 21: 33–45; Mark 12: 1–12; Luke 20: 9–19; also Jer. 2: 21; Psa. 80: 8–16.
3. As to the watch-tower compare Mic. 4: 8.
4. In connection with v. 5 see Song 2: 15.
5. Regarding the winepress see Judg. 6: 11.
6. With the series of woes, vs. 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22, compare Luke 6: 24–26.
7. Read the Hebrew land laws and references to them, Lev. 25: 8–34; 27: 24; 1 Kings 21; Num. 27: 1–11; 36; 33: 54; Psa. 49: 11; Mic. 2: 2.
8. Regarding early drinking see Eccl. 10: 16, 17; Acts 2: 15.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the class to prepare at home, in the form of a list, the charges made by Isaiah against the Hebrew nation. Ask that each bring some item regarding strong drink and the harm it does.

Manual Work. — You may make a sand model of a vineyard, with a watch-tower fashioned of pasteboard. Models of ancient musical instruments may be made from pictures in the Bible Dictionary. Have the scholars draw roughly a tower representing the two billion dollars that this country spends every year for strong drink, and beside it, in the same proportion, a tower representing our ten-million dollar gift for foreign missions.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — Vineyards in Palestine. Vineyard Parables of the Bible. Musical Instruments of the Hebrews. The Perils of Wealth. The Perils of Pleasure. How the Drink Demon Threatens Our Nation.

Learn by Heart. — V. 11; 1 Tim. 6: 17–19; Nah. 1: 10.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Probably near the beginning of Isaiah's long life as a prophet, which was inaugurated in the year when King Uzziah died, B.C. 755 (Beecher), or B.C. 749 (Hastings).

Place. — Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem.

Kings. — In Israel, Menahem; in Assyria, Asshur-daan III.

Prophets. — Hosea, Micah.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Isaiah, especially Delitzsch, *The Cambridge Bible*, and Mitchell's *Isaiah, a Study of Chapters I.–XII.* On the vineyards of Palestine see Van Lennep's *Bible Lands*, chapter V.; Thomson's *The Land and the Book*, Vol. I., page 277. The latest book on temperance, and one of the most valuable ever published, is *Alcohol, How It Affects the Individual, the Community, and the Race*, by Henry Smith Williams, M.D., LL.D. Another exceedingly valuable volume, recently published, is *Alcohol and the Human Body*, by Horsley and Sturge. See also Cherrington's *Year Book of the Anti-Saloon League*, and Wilson's *American Prohibition Year Book.*

Isaiah Pictures Three Great Evils of His Nation, That Are Also Great Evils of Our Own Nation.

Introduction. — Isaiah, like all great teachers, was obliged to speak many stern warnings. Individuals and nations are best pleased with leaders that praise and flatter them; but such men are enemies rather than friends, and demagogues rather than statesmen. In our own nation we have many braggarts, and many easy-going, over-sanguine citizens; but

1. Now will I / Let me sing to / for my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching [1] his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath / had a vineyard in [a] a very fruitful hill:

2. And / and he fenced / made a trench about it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made / hewed out a winepress therein: [2] and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Jū'dah, [3] judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

[1] Psa. 80: 8; Isa. 27: 2; Matt. 21: 33; Mark 12: 1; Luke 20: 9.
[2] Deut. 32: 6; Isa. 1: 2, 3.
[3] Rom. 3: 4.
[a] Heb., *a horn, the son of oil.*

the wise men are like Isaiah, clear-eyed to perceive national and personal sins. Vigilance against these is the only price of liberty in a nation and peace in an individual. The old Greek maxim, "Know thyself," is still the foundation of true knowledge and wisdom. In our lesson the great prophet warns his nation against three national evils, and we may study his utterance under three heads:

I. THE WILD-GRAPE VINEYARD, OR, NATIONAL INGRATITUDE TO GOD, THE GIVER OF NATIONAL BLESSINGS (vs. 1–7).
   A. God's work for the nation (vs. 1, 2, 7).
   B. The nation's response (vs. 3, 4, 7).
   C. The punishment (vs. 5, 6).

II. THE GREEDY ESTATE, OR, THE MENACE OF UNGODLY AND UNPHILANTHROPIC WEALTH (vs. 8–10).
   The increase of both wealth and poverty.
   The danger and the cure.

III. THE RECKLESS REVELERS, OR, INTEMPERANCE THE GREAT PERIL OF THE NATION (vs. 11, 12).
   The saloon evil.
   Its fatal result.

HOW TO BANISH THE SALOON.
   A. By individual total abstinence.
   B. By education.
   C. By organization.
   D. By agitation.
   E. By law.
   F. By law-enforcement.

I. The Wild-Grape Vineyard, or, National Ingratitude to God, the Giver of National Blessings.—Vs. 1–7. "This parable is the finest of Isaiah's prophecies, and one of the most admirable literary productions in the Old Testament."—*Prof. H. G. Mitchell.* It emphasizes three thoughts:

Vineyard in Hebron, with Ruins of Watch-tower.

A. GOD'S WORK FOR THE NATION (vs. 1, 2, 7). ***How does Isaiah gain attention for his message?*** Much as Homer would get attention for his; he proposes to **sing . . . a song.** "One can imagine the interest that such a proposition would excite, and the eagerness with which people would gather about him as he ran his fingers over the instrument on which he was going to accompany himself."—*Mitchell.* It is thus that the evangelists on Boston Common get their crowds, and many missionaries on their itineraries. In addition, Isaiah puts personal interest into his song by saying that it was made by a friend of his, and is about that friend.

What is the first picture of the song? The making of an Eastern vineyard. First,

4. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5. And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: [1] I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the wall fence thereof, and it shall be [a] trodden down:

6. And and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged hoed: but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

7. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Jū'dah [b] his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, judgement, but behold [c] oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

[1] Psa. 80: 12.
a Heb., *for a treading.*
b Heb., *plant of his delight.*
c Or, *shedding of blood.*

a suitable site was selected, the usual hillside location, that the vines might get the full force of the sun. Next, he dug up the ground thoroughly with the mattock (not *fenced it*, or *made a trench about it*, but as in the R.V. margin). Then he gathered up the stones, great numbers of which had been unearthed — a laborious task, as it is on a New England farm. With these he made the wall mentioned in v. 5. Then, after soaking the cuttings for some days in water, he **planted** the ground **with the choicest vine**, — a technical term for "the finest kind of Eastern vine with bright-red grapes." —*Delitzsch.* His next step was to build a stone tower, with a room on the ground to shelter the watchman of the vineyard from the cold and storms and a winding stair leading to the flat top from which a watch against thieves might be kept up.

Winepress in a Vineyard.

Finally, he hewed a winepress out of the solid rock, — a soft limestone, easily worked, like the stone of many of our west-central States, which can be cut like wood when freshly taken from the rock-bed, but becomes hard after exposure to the air. The winepress consisted of "an oblong or square excavation in the form of a shallow tank, with a hole in one side near the bottom, through which the grape-juice ran into a smaller basin." — *Van Lennep.*

What did Isaiah symbolize by this vineyard? **The house of Israel, and** (especially) **the men of Judah** (v. 7). Psalm 106 and the address of Stephen (Acts 7) relate in some detail God's fostering care for the chosen people. He had given them many great deliverances, from Egypt, at Rephidim, the Jordan, Jericho, against the Philistines, Midianites, Ammonites, Syrians, Egyptians, Assyrians. He had given them great leaders, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Elijah, Elisha, Amos. He had given them the Law, the Temple, the only pure religion. He had given them a noble country, small, but marvelously safe against attack. He had not so dealt with any other nation.

How is all this like God's dealings with our own country? We also can look back over a history full of deliverances. America was settled by men escaping from civil and religious oppression. The colonists had many marvelous deliverances from the Indians and

8. Woe unto them that join [1] house to house, (*that* lay field to field), till (*there be*) no (place, that they may be placed) alone in the midst of the (earth)!
9. [2] In mine ears (*said* the) LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, (*even*) great and fair, without inhabitant.
10. (*Yea, For*) ten acres of vineyard shall yield one [3] bath, and (the seed) of (an homer) shall yield (*but*) an ephah.

[1] Mic. 2: 2. [2] Isa. 22: 14. [3] Ezek. 45: 11.

other foes. The Union has been saved by the greatest civil war in all history. We have had among our leaders some of the world's chief men, — Washington, Lincoln, Grant, Jefferson, Franklin. The world's greatest oceans preserve our country from attack. We have a vast territory, wonderfully rich in minerals and producing harvests abundant enough for us and for other nations. In wealth, numbers, and power God has developed this country faster than any other land in the world's history.

What did God rightly expect from the Hebrews? The natural fruit of such a vineyard, so carefully prepared, — fine, cultivated grapes, and a full crop; that is, he expected obedience to his commands, and love and gratitude and worship. Instead, he got nothing but **wild grapes**, small, sour, and hard, — such results as a nation might show that had received no special benefits from Jehovah. In v. 7 is a powerful balancing of words that cannot be translated, but only hinted at:

> "And I hoped for *good* rule, and behold! *blood*-rule,
> And for law-*keeping*, and behold! law-*breaking*."
> — *New Century Bible.*

What transgressions of the Hebrews had Isaiah in mind? A long list of them, — murmurings and rebellions in the desert, calf-worship even at the foot of Sinai, alliances with the heathen, the introduction of idolatry and many iniquitous practices, the choice of kings instead of judges, the rejection of such prophets as Amos, neglect of the sanctuary and the priests, worldliness, injustice, the oppression of the poor. Wild grapes indeed.

If Isaiah were living now, could he bring the same charge against our nation? Yes; in spite of gifts to missions, charities, and education exceeding any known before in the world's history, and in spite of the many devoted reformers, preachers, teachers, and Christian citizens, we are known as a mammon-worshiping nation. We are proud of our power, and spend more on a single battleship than on foreign missions. Our lynchings and divorces and suicides and insane give us an unenviable notoriety. Our cities are worst ruled of all nations of the first class. Graft in politics and speculation in trade are conducted on an enormous scale. In this vineyard of God's loving planting he finds wild grapes.

How would Jehovah punish his ungrateful vineyard? He would **take away the hedge** of thorns, and let in the cattle to graze there; and the stone wall, and let men trample over it. He would not prune it, or weed it with the hoe, but let the thorns and briers take possession of it. And to complete the desolation, no rain should be allowed to fall on it. All this took place when God removed the hedge and wall of his protection from his people, and let in the Assyrians to lay waste the country.

And may such a fate befall our own land? Certainly, unless we are obedient to Jehovah. Nations as rich and powerful as ours have been destroyed for the same reason — Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. There is no national or personal safety except in obedience to God.

II. **The Greedy Estate, or, the Menace of Ungodly and Unphilanthropic Wealth.** — Vs. 8–10. The parable was general; Isaiah next comes to particulars, — the two great fundamental sins of his people, and of all nations. "It is with remarkable persistence that in every civilization the two main passions of the human heart, love of wealth and love of pleasure, the instinct to gather and the instinct to squander, have sought precisely these two forms denounced by Isaiah in which to work their social havoc — appropriation of the soil and indulgence in strong drink. Every civilized community develops sooner or later its land-question and its liquor-question." — *Prof. George Adam Smith.*

What was the original state of land-ownership in Palestine? At first the land was divided as equally as possible among the tribes and the families, and very careful laws were made (see Inductive Study 7) to prevent the permanent alienation of it, by marriage, in-

heritance, sale, or gift. Every fifty years, in the year of jubilee, all land whose owners had been obliged to sell it, through poverty or any other cause, was returned to the original owners. The last year of Uzziah, when Isaiah began to prophesy, was a year of jubilee, but the custom was no longer observed. Ancient landmarks were removed. Owners of small holdings were driven away, or killed as Naboth was killed by Ahab for the sake of his bit of land. Debtors were ground down. The greed and pride of the rich, and their selfish desire for isolation, led them to join field to field until they possessed vast estates, and add house to house until they had a wretched army of tenants under their thumbs. The Roman patricians did the same thing, and first Licinius and later the Gracchi tried to prevent it by agrarian laws. In England, in the sixteenth century, Latimer made a bold protest against the inclosure of commons. For centuries in Ireland the fundamental difficulty has been the fact that most of the land has been owned by great landlords, often living in England, while the Irish who had to have land to till, or starve, were completely at their mercy. Now the nation, at vast expense, is forcibly buying the land from its owners, and selling it to the peasants on easy terms. As I write a great parliamentary struggle is in progress in England over the attempt to compel the owners of immense tracts of land in England to bear their just share of taxation.

Is the land-question an American question also? In its essentials, yes. Thomas Carlyle once said to an American: "Ye may boast o' yer dimocracy, or any ither 'cracy, or any kind o' poleetical roobish; but the reason why yer laboring folk are so happy is thot ye have a *vast deal o' land for a verra few people.*" That was true then, for in 1880 "one-half of our territory was, for the most part, uninhabited."—*Josiah Strong.* Now, with the sale of the Indian lands to settlers and the rapid opening up of the great northwest and southwest, all that is changed, and soon land may here be as difficult for the ordinary citizen to get hold of as it is in Europe. Hence the agitation of the followers of Henry George, the "single-taxers," who propose to levy all taxes upon land alone, and thus force it out of private hands into public ownership.

But what, back of the land-question, is the fundamental difficulty? The menace of ungodly and unphilanthropic wealth, in any form, — land, or railroads, or mines, or mills, or houses to rent, or stocks and bonds, or money to lend. There is more than one American whose income is more than a million dollars a month. There are nineteen States whose wealth is exceeded by the wealth of more than one of our multi-millionaires. Thomas G. Shearman declares that 200,000 persons, or less than one-fourth of one per cent of our population, control 70 per cent of the wealth of the nation. The irresistible tendency to form great combinations of capital increases these vast fortunes at an ever more rapid rate. Such concentration of wealth throws into the hands of the rich a fearful power for good or evil. Many of them use it conscientiously and for good, but others live only for more money and more power, — that they may add mills to mills and railroads to railroads, which is as bad as the adding of land to land in Isaiah's day.

What result did Isaiah prophesy? That, as actually happened during the captivity, the beautiful palaces should become desolate, and the great estates barren. **Ten acres** (literally, *yokes, i.e.*, as much as a team of cattle could plough in one day) **of vineyard** should **yield** only **one bath** of wine, 21.26 quarts; only **an ephah** (= a bath, dry measure) of grain should be the return from a homer (= 10 baths) of seed. Of course such harvests would mean starvation.

Are we to look for anything like this in America? The punishment of wrong-doing is not always in the same mode, but sin is always punished. Selfishness is spiritual starvation. A greedy life is a barren, fruitless life. This danger assails common people, even poor people, as well as multi-millionaires. It is the *love* of money, and not money itself, that is the root of all kinds of evil.

> "O curséd lust of gold! when for thy sake
> The fool throws up his interest in both worlds, —
> First starved in this, then damned in that to come." — *Blair.*

"A child can clench its fist the moment it is born." — *Shenstone.* No matter how little you have, you can be selfish and miserly with it; and no matter how much you have, you can use it all as God's steward. Misery, shame, and essential want are the results of selfishness in America, just as much as in Israel and Judah in the days of Isaiah.

III. The Reckless Revelers, or, Intemperance the Great Peril of the Nation. — Vs. 11, 12. ***What is Isaiah's second "Woe"?*** Against drunkenness and its accompanying evils, and the irreligion that goes with them. The mad passion for alcohol **sends them to the bottle early in the morning.** "Drinking in the morning was consid-

11. [1] Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that* that they may follow strong drink; that continue until tarry late into the night, *till* till wine inflame them!

12. And [2] the harp and the viol, lute. the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in *or* their feasts: but [3] they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider have they considered the operation of his hands.

[1] V. 22; Prov. 23: 29. [2] Amos 6: 5, 6. [3] Job 34: 27; Psa. 28: 5.

ered disreputable, by the Jews and Romans; but not, apparently, by the Arabs: The word for **strong drink** seems to be a general name for various kinds of alcoholic liquors obtained from dates, honey, raisins, barley, etc." — *Cambridge Bible.* They continue till late in the evening, wine inflaming them (Delitzsch's translation). The Hebrew word translated *inflame* means *chase* as well as *burn;* drink *drives* men *crazy.* To drown their consciences, and still further excite their passions, they employ music, as do modern saloons and other base resorts, — the music of **the harp,** such as "David played, — a stringed instrument with a sounding-board, like the lute; another with strings, but without the sounding-board, the psaltery (**the viol**); **the tabret,** or drum; and the flute, or **pipe,** in one of its many forms." — *Mitchell.*

What was the result of these sensual pleasures? The same as to-day: the drunkards took no thought for Jehovah, and were altogether blind to **the operation of his hands,** the doom which Isaiah saw coming swiftly upon the ungodly nation.

Would Isaiah pronounce this woe upon our nation, if he were living to-day? He certainly would. To be sure, there is the most drinking late at night, especially after the theater performances are over; and for that reason the temperance reformers try everywhere to pass laws closing the saloons by eleven o'clock at night. Still, it is very common, in our cities, to see drunken men staggering around the streets in the morning, in the midst of a "spree" that may last for days. Modern men drink many fiery, distilled liquors unknown to the ancients. They have added the common use of many drugs, such as opium and cocaine, whose physical and mental effects are more terrible and swift even than those of alcohol. And still the saloon is the center of all other sins against society, — licentiousness, murder, gambling, graft, political misrule, all are closely-connected with the saloon. Ex-governor Hanly of Indiana, in his final message to the legislature, January 8, 1909, said: "Alcohol must be held responsible for about four-fifths of the propensities that make necessary the huge paraphernalia of police systems, criminal courts, jails, prisons, and reformatories that constitute so serious a blot upon present-day civilization." This ruin of national character and of individual lives is the indirect cost of the drink traffic, and by far the heavier even in dollars, in spite of the fact that the direct cost of the saloon, our national drink bill, reaches the incomprehensible sum of more than two billion dollars every year.

HOW TO BANISH THE SALOON.

The war against King Alcohol divides itself into six principal campaigns, all going on at once: (1) individual total abstinence, (2) education, (3) organization, (4) agitation, (5) law, (6) law-enforcement.

1. INDIVIDUAL TOTAL ABSTINENCE. During recent years, especially in Germany, scientists of the highest rank have made thorough and conclusive investigation of the effect of alcohol on the human body.

For example, an instrument called an "ergograph" or "work-recorder" has tested the strength and endurance of the muscles of the index-finger, and it has been proved that the taking with a meal of only one ounce of alcohol decreases muscular power by 8 per cent.

One set of dogs has been given some alcohol regularly, and another set, free from alcohol, has been compared with them. The alcoholized dogs had only half the energy in bringing back balls shown by the others.

Men were placed at self-recording telegraph keys, which they were to press at a given signal, say a flash of light. The time required to note the signal and depress the key, called the "reaction-time," noticeably lengthens when even a small amount of alcohol is taken.

Men were made to add columns of figures, to memorize numbers, to give after a word is pronounced some associated word that it brought to mind (such as "table," suggesting "chair" or "able"), and it was proved that all these mental processes are hindered and depreciated by alcohol.

Four professional typesetters, habitual drinkers, were allowed to take on certain days

only one ounce of alcohol (in the form of wine), and on other days no alcohol at all. On the latter days they set 10 per cent more type than on the former, and made fewer errors.

The record of 591 public-school children in Vienna was examined: only 134 of them were total abstainers, but 42 per cent of these ranked as "good" and 49 per cent as "fair," while the rank of the rest went down rapidly according as they drank beer or wine only occasionally, or once, twice, or thrice a day.

By investigations of this sort it has been thoroughly proved that the use of even a small quantity of alcohol diminishes one's muscular and mental power enough to throw one far behind in the race of life, especially in these days of fierce competition.

And are these bad effects permanent? Undoubtedly so. "Alcohol is not merely a poison, but the most subtle, the most far-reaching, and, judged by its ultimate effects, incomparably the most virulent of all poisons." — *Henry Smith Williams, M.D., LL.D.* It permanently weakens the heart, stomach, liver, kidneys, brain and nervous tissues, causing diseases of all these organs. It renders the drinker more susceptible to contagion. It is a fatal ally of tuberculosis and pneumonia. The statistics of life-insurance companies prove that even moderate drinking shortens life. The positive conclusions of modern science leave no room for any course but strict total abstinence from alcohol, if a man cares to be strong, efficient, and successful.

2. EDUCATION. If our public schools are to give the scholars a practical preparation for life, certainly no subject is of greater importance than temperance. Laws requiring scientific temperance instruction have therefore been passed in all the States and by the national government, and more than forty temperance physiologies, for all grades, have been written. Nearly a million essays on temperance themes are written every year by school children. The universities, colleges, and normal schools are taking up the study.

3. ORGANIZATION. There are about 300,000 liquor-dealers in the United States. There are more than five million men employed in the manufacture of liquors. There are four powerful national organizations of liquor men, and many smaller organizations. No headway could be made against this tremendous force without organization on the part of Christians. The encouraging temperance gains of recent years have been made through the activity of these temperance organizations, including the W.C.T.U., Prohibition Party, Anti-Saloon League, National Temperance Society, and the various temperance orders.

4. AGITATION. Some States, such as Massachusetts, require the question of saloon or no saloon to be voted on at each annual election, thus keeping the matter constantly before the people. Even in the prohibition States continual agitation is necessary, to prevent the illegal sale of liquor and preserve the sentiment for prohibition. Liquor firms advertise largely, and often bring pressure upon the editorial columns of the papers in which they advertise. Many newspapers are thus led to suppress news of temperance victories, and to print false statements about the "healthfulness of beer" and that "prohibition does not prohibit."

5. LAW. The "temperance wave" of the past two or three years has placed hundreds of strict temperance laws upon the statute books of most of the States. The prohibition States now include Maine, Kansas, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. On the brink of prohibition, as we write, are Arkansas, Florida, South Carolina, and Texas. More than half of the following States is "dry" territory: Massachusetts, Virginia, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Delaware, Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The advantages of prohibition in all this rapidly increasing territory are shown in the greatly lessened work of courts and jails, the diminished taxation, the lowered death-rate, and definite increase in trade and manufactures as compared with license communities.

6. LAW-ENFORCEMENT. It is never enough to pass a temperance measure. The open saloon at once becomes a secret saloon, a "blind tiger." "Near-beers" and other drinks are concocted, containing just enough alcohol to escape the law, and sold openly. Saloons spring up on the edge of the prohibition territory. Patent medicines with a large per cent of alcohol are used as drinks. Worst of all, the United States laws allow the express companies to carry liquor into prohibition territory, and thus far Congress has not been persuaded or compelled to forbid it. Temperance can never become enthroned in this nation till we elect temperance legislators and executives and judges. The task needs the united and zealous effort of all right-thinking men and women, boys and girls. It is preeminently the task before the young knighthood of the twentieth century.

LESSON IX. — May 28.

MICAH'S PICTURE OF UNIVERSAL PEACE. (INTERNATIONAL PEACE LESSON.) — Micah 4: 1–8.

COMMIT vs. 2, 3. READ Micah.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*** — MIC. 4: 3.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read the book of Micah.

2. Compare Isa. 2: 2–4 with the first verses of our lesson, and determine which was probably quoted from the other. Compare also Joel 3: 10, 18; Hos. 2: 18; Zech. 9: 10.

3. With v. 4 compare Lev. 26: 3–6; 1 Kings 4: 25; 2 Kings 18: 31; Zech. 3: 10.

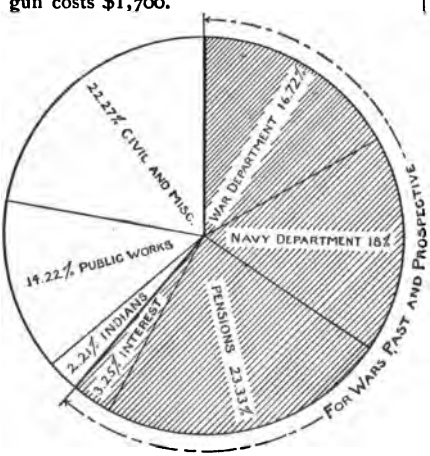
4. For illustrations of v. 7 see Mic. 2: 12; Isa. 11: 11; 60: 22; Zeph. 3: 19; Rom. 9: 27.

5. For the tower of the flock (Eder, v. 8) see Gen. 35: 21; and for the strengthening of the strong hold (Ophel) see 2 Chron. 27: 3.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Have the scholars read the book of Micah at home, giving titles to the different chapters, and comparing the titles in the class. Send them to the histories and to the almanacs and year-books published by the large newspapers for information regarding the cost of war. You might easily give each scholar a different peace pamphlet (getting them from the American Peace Society), asking that the pamphlet be read and something from it be told in the class.

Manual Work. — A battleship costs $10,000,000. Have the scholars make a big black circle for it. Then opposite have them make as many dots as the number of schoolhouses, at $20,000 each, that could be built for the money. A single shot of a big gun costs $1,700.



Expenditures of the United States in 1908.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — The Prophet Micah and His Book. What War Costs in Money. What War Costs in Men. What War Costs in Sorrow. How War May Be Abolished. The Federation of the World.

Learn by Heart. — Vs. 2, 3; Isa. 9: 6; Luke 1: 79.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time.—Micah prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who reigned (Beecher) from B.C. 754 to B.C. 695.

Place. — He probably lived in his native town, Moresheth-gath, southwest of Jerusalem.

Prophets. — Isaiah and Hosea.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Expositor's Bible (volume by George Adam Smith). Farrar's *The Minor Prophets.* White's *The Twelve Minor Prophets.* Cheyne in *The Cambridge Bible. A Biblical Introduction*, by Bennett and Adeney. Elmslie, in *Book by Book.* On the beating of swords into plowshares compare Martial XIV. 34; Virgil, *Georg.* I. 508; Ovid, *Fast.* I. 699. *World Organization*, by Raymond L. Bridgman. Trueblood's *The Federation of the World.* The American Peace Society, 31 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., will furnish to teachers at cost a large number of valuable pamphlets on peace, especially valuable being Mrs. Ames's *Primer of the Peace Movement*, Dr. Trueblood's *The Cost of War*, Dr. Jefferson's *Some Fallacies of Militarism*, and *Economic Facts for Practical People.*

The Terrible Evils of War, and the Coming of the Reign of Peace.

Introduction. — ***Why is this an important lesson?*** Because it deals with a subject that is of the greatest moment in our modern life, a problem that is rapidly approaching solution. After ages of warfare, the world seems nearing the era of peace. In the forming of the Hague Tribunal the world has taken, in our lifetime, by far the longest step ever taken toward realizing the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood. But, strange to say, while this has been going on, the world's expenditures in preparation for war have been increased beyond anything the past has known or imagined, so that the cost of a militant peace has become the world's heaviest burden. We are to discuss, therefore, as a vital, urgent theme:

SUBJECT: THE TERRIBLE EVILS OF WAR, AND THE COMING OF THE REIGN OF PEACE.

I. MICAH: THE PROPHET AND HIS MESSAGE.

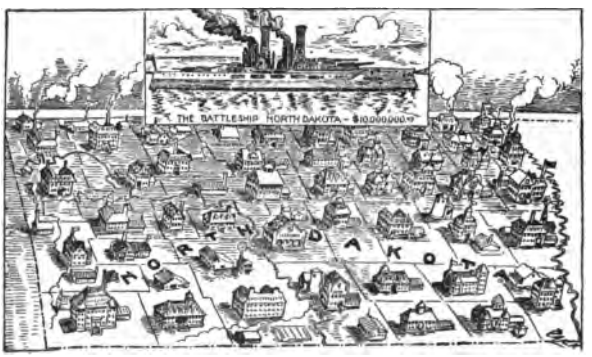
II. MICAH'S VISION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE (vs. 1–8).
- A. Its center and source (vs. 1, 2, 8).
- B. How it will come (v. 3).
- C. Its blessed results (vs. 4–7).

III. A STUDY OF WAR AND THE WAR SPIRIT.
- Is war ever justifiable?
- What harm is done by war?
- What is to take the place of war?
- How can we inaugurate the reign of peace?
- What are recent gains in this direction?

I. Micah: the Prophet and His Message. — ***What is the meaning of Micah's name?*** "Who is like Jehovah?" alluded to, probably, in Mic. 7: 18. Micaiah (Jer. 26: 18) is another form of his name.

When did he prophesy? In the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (Mic. 1: 1), B.C. 754 to B.C. 695 (Beecher), B.C. 749 to B.C. 686 (Hastings). He was a younger contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea.

Where did he live? His native town was Moresheth-gath (Mic. 1: 1, 14), southwest of Jerusalem and south of Gath, "with views over the Philistine country to the Mediterranean, and backed by the loftier hills which rise to the plateau on which Jerusalem is placed. The home of Micah thus lay a good day's journey from the capital, which, if we may judge from the vividness of his descriptions, he must frequently have visited." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.*



What the Cost of a Battleship Would Do in a State.

This striking picture, by the cartoonist, Charles L. Bartholomew, appeared in *The Minneapolis Journal.* It illustrates the fact that the $10,000,000 spent for the new battleship *North Dakota* would put a $25,000 agricultural school and experiment farm in every county in the State of North Dakota, with an endowment fund of $175,000 for each school, which, if invested in Dakota farm mortgages, would yield $10,500 annually for the maintenance of each school, and leave a $1,000,000 endowment for the State agricultural college.

What was the condition of the Hebrews when Micah prophesied? The Northern Kingdom was still standing, but tottering to its fall, and the terrible Assyrian power was threatening both Israel and Judah (Mic. 5: 5, 6). Micah's words were directed to both Jerusalem and Samaria (Mic. 1: 5).

How is Micah's prophecy divided? Into three parts (chapters 1 and 2, 3–5, 6 and 7), each introduced by the words, "Hear ye." The first part pronounces judgment on Jerusalem and Samaria for their sins, the second part foretells the coming of a Saviour, the third part describes true religion.

What was Micah's message? George Adam Smith calls him "the Prophet of the Poor," and says: "While Micah spoke he had wasted lives and bent backs before him. Pinched peasant-faces peer between all his words. Micah was the prophet of the country

1. But [1] in the last (latter) days it shall come to pass, that (that) the mountain of the house of the LORD (LORD'S house) shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people (peoples) shall flow unto it.

2. And many nations shall come, (go) and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jā'cob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law (out of Zion) shall go forth of Zion, (the law,) and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

3. And he shall judge among (between) many people, (peoples,) and rebuke (shall reprove) strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into [2] plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up [a] sword against nation, [3] neither shall they learn war any more.

[1] Isa. 2: 2, etc.; Ezek. 17: 22. [2] Isa. 2: 4. [3] Psa. 72: 7.

as distinct from the capital, of the peasants as against the rich who oppressed them." Many consider Mic. 6: 6–8 to be the noblest utterance of all Hebrew prophecy. In it "we have the sum and substance of the teaching of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah." — *Fairweather*. But the heart of Micah's thought is his confident expectation of the Messiah, as shown in the passage we study to-day, and in the great verse, Mic. 5: 2, which is quoted in Matt. 2: 6.

What is Micah's literary style? "Graphic and poetical, yet concise and vigorous. He resembles Isaiah in the use of impressive imagery (Mic. 1: 3, ff.), and Hosea in the abruptness of his transitions (*e.g.* Mic. 4: 8–11). His writings abound in bold interrogations (Mic. 1: 5; 2: 7) and plays upon words (Mic. 1: 10–15), and exhibit a keen vein of irony (Mic. 2: 6)." — *Fairweather*. "Micah does not quite command the grand style of Isaiah, but he is more sharply telling and direct. In width of survey and weight of movement he differs from his great contemporary, somewhat as a tribune of the people or a preacher of righteousness differs from a statesman of the first order." — *Professor Elmslie*.

What was Micah's influence? The reference to Micah in Jer. 26: 17–19 shows that the prophet wielded a powerful influence at the court and in the capital, while he must have been a favorite leader among the common people.

II. **Micah's Vision of Universal Peace.** — Vs. 1–8. A. ITS CENTER AND SOURCE (vs. 1, 2, 8). Micah has been picturing the sins of his nation, and the terrible punishment that was to come as a result. Now he turns in a flash to a contrasting picture, the glorious, peaceful reign of Messiah.

When was this to come? **In the last** (R.V., "latter") **days.** There is no thought that this happy time is to conclude human existence, but it is to be the last stage of human existence, and is to be unending.

What vision of this coming time did Micah have? He saw the beloved Mount Zion, the eastern, Temple hill of Jerusalem. It was called (v. 8) the **tower of the flock**, the flock being the Hebrews, and the Temple being compared to the watch-tower into which the shepherds went for shelter in a storm or for protection from robbers. It is also called **the strong hold** (Hebrew, *Ophel*), because on Ophel, its southern point, a fort was situated which King Jotham had strengthened. Zion is not a mountain but only a small hill, about 400 feet above the valley; yet the prophet saw it rising grandly and surely until it was lifted up far above the loftiest summits of the highest mountains on earth. "I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this — a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing, till all the high hills become absorbed, and that which was but a little rising ground before becomes a hill the top whereof reaches to the seventh heaven." — *Spurgeon*.

ILLUSTRATION. The ancients thought that Vulcan was buried under Mount Etna, and when the giant rolled over the mountain trembled and fire burst forth. The church of God, says Spurgeon, is like that living mountain, having within her the fire, not of destruction, but of vital truth, which causes constant expansion, constant growth. This is because Christ, the Life, is within the hill. "Once he was prostrate in the Garden; then he rose, and day by day as he is lifted up his church rises with him."

What was the second part of Micah's vision? He saw restored **the first** (R.V., "former") **dominion** (v. 8), the glory that was his nation's under David and Solomon; yes, even more than that, since he saw many nations **flow unto it** to learn of the ways of

4. [1] But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree;
and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath
spoken *it*.

5. For [2] all *the peoples* will walk every one in the name of his god, and [3] we
will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

6. In that day, saith the LORD, [4] will I assemble her that halteth, [5] and I
will gather her that is driven *away*, and her that I have afflicted;

7. And I will make her that halted [6] a remnant, and her that was cast far
off a strong nation: and the LORD [7] shall reign over them in mount Zion
from henceforth even for ever.

[1] 1 Kings 4: 25.
[2] Jer. 2: 11.
[3] Zech. 10: 12.
[4] Ezek. 34: 16.
[5] Psa. 147: 2; Ezek. 34: 13.
[6] Mic. 2: 12.
[7] Isa. 9: 6; Luke 1: 33.

Jehovah, the teachings of the true religion. *Flow* implies an impetuous, voluntary onrush, like the inward sweep of the sixty-foot tides in the Bay of Fundy. Nations then will be "born in a day." Converts will come by Pentecosts. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. It is from this triumphant Church of God that universal peace will spring. It cannot come from any other source.

B. HOW IT WILL COME (v. 3). ***What does Micah see as the chief feature of the coming kingdom of Messiah?*** That it will be a kingdom of peace. The judgment and the rebuke of God will condemn national errors effectively, without the clumsy arbitrament of the sword. **Rebuke** means "be umpire for." "How remarkable, the constant reiteration in the prophets of the ultimate extinction of war, to which this passage adds the substitution of arbitration!" — *Cambridge Bible.*

What is Micah's famous symbol of peace? That **swords** shall be beaten **into plowshares, and spears into pruninghooks.** "Literally, the short broad sword of the Israelites might readily be converted into a share, and the spear forged into a pruning-hook." — *Pulpit Commentary.* "It would seem to follow that the material of which the peaceful instruments are made is the very same of which the warlike instruments were made, not the first of iron, and the other of some feeble and more flexible substance. Till, then, all the energies of war are faithfully represented in the acts and services of peace, the prophecy is not fulfilled. It cannot be fulfilled unless the settled purpose of an army, its unity and concentration, the self-devotion of its individual members, the consciousness of a common interest in the leader and in the humblest soldier, are transferred to civil life." — *F. D. Maurice.*

C. ITS BLESSED RESULTS (vs. 4–7). — ***What will mark the age of peace?*** The return to the land, of which the peasants had been dispossessed by the great landed proprietors of which we learned last Sunday. **Every man** shall sit under his own grapevine, and not be afraid of eviction. Piety will be universal in that day; for, while other nations continue to walk blindly in the name of their false and useless gods, Israel will walk in the name of the true God, who alone can preserve and bless. Further, to this restored and glorified Israel there will return all its exiles that have become scattered among the nations. They will come back lame and bruised, like a flock that has been dispersed by the storm, but is gathered again under the care of the loving shepherd. Even out of these returned fragments God will make a strong nation, and will rule over them forever in Mount Zion. This is the splendid prophecy whose fulfilment we are seeing as the kingdom of Christ, with love and peace and joy, makes its way in the hearts of men.

III. **A Study of Modern War and the War Spirit.** — The central thought of this magnificent passage is the reign of Messiah, that which all our churches exist to establish. The most striking evidence of that reign is the inauguration of universal peace. Therefore we cannot apply the lesson to ourselves without a study of modern war.

Is war ever justifiable? "The British government in India had a war with a nation (if we may name it so) called Pindarees. They were a terrible assemblage of outlaws, robbers, and murderers, to the number of fifty thousand, occupying a strong and almost inaccessible tract on the northern frontier. Thence with impetuous rapidity they rushed down, all horsemen, on the country, inhabited by a population of cultivators; seized whatever could easily be carried off, and with furious eagerness demolished, burned, destroyed the rest. But far more than this, they were universally possessed with the spirit of murder;

8. And thou, O tower of [a] the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come; even yea, the first former dominion; shall come, the kingdom shall come to of the daughter of Jerusalem.

a Or, *Eder.*

they killed the people, without regard to age or sex; not only so, but when sufficiently at leisure for such amusement, they inflicted excruciating tortures previous to death. If war is in all possible cases wrong, the British Governor-General perpetrated an enormous crime against Christianity in marching his armies with a celerity unparalleled in that climate, and encountering, intercepting, and exterminating the murderers, so that the surviving people could feel themselves in peace." — *John Foster.* Under such conditions an army is merely on police duty, and war is merely the forcible arrest of a murderous nation.

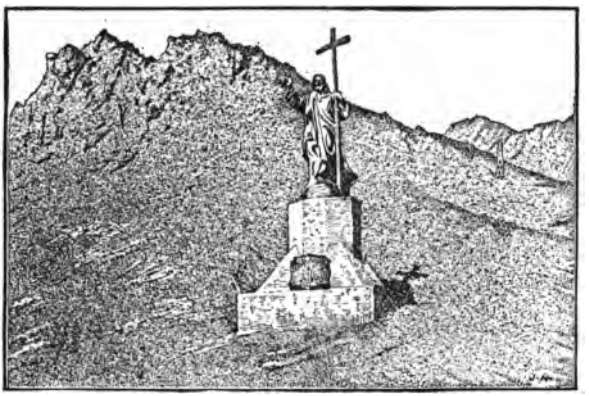
But cannot all this be accomplished in a peaceful way? It certainly can, though there is not always time for it, since it requires many years. But look at the transformation wrought in the Fiji Islands by the Wesleyan missionaries. "Those islands were the central hell on earth. Cannibalism reigned there in its most revolting cruelty. Mothers would rub pieces of human flesh over the lips of babies to give them a taste for blood. Few men lived to old age. Husbands, seized with the horrible hunger, would kill and eat their wives. Sometimes the victims were cut up alive before being placed in the ovens. Live men and women were used as rollers for the launching of the great war canoes. Now, through the persistent, long-continued labors of the peaceful missionaries, there is in the Fijis a large and controlling population of lovely Christians, devout beyond the average Christian in America, and laboring to evangelize the other less fortunate islands." — *Amos R. Wells*, in "*Into All the World.*"

But are not armies and navies necessary as national police? "Police do not punish criminals, but use only that minimum of force necessary to bring them to an impartial court. Armies and navies, on the contrary, settle cases themselves by sheer brute force, without reference to evidence or justice. National armies and navies will diminish gradually, to be replaced at last by a small international armed police." — *Lucia Ames Mead.* War seldom really settles disputes between nations. "It may be laid down as a political and historic truth that a peace which is born only of force is a peace which is temporary and disappointing." — *Justice Brewer, of the United States Supreme Court.*

What harm is done by war? "It has been estimated that the aggregate loss of life, in all the wars which have occurred since the beginning of authentic history, has not been less than 15,000,000,000. Forty thousand millions of dollars is about what the nations have paid in solid cash in a single century for the folly and wickedness of war. In addition, the cost in the destruction of property is enormous. General Sherman estimated that property to the amount of at least three hundred millions of dollars was destroyed outright by his army during the march to the sea. Before we are through with it we shall have paid out in Civil War pensions not less than $5,000,000,000. The indirect damage done to the United States by the Southern cruisers was over $4,000,000,000. If we place the earning power of the million men, North and South, who perished in the Civil War at only $400 per man annually, in forty years, which they would have lived on the average, they would have been worth to the nation the enormous sum of $16,000,000,000. If the 14,000,000 young men slain in the wars of the past century had been saved to their countries, in forty years they would have increased the wealth of the world, at $300 each per year, by $208,000,000,000. The annual cost of the armies and navies of the principal military and naval powers of the world is more than $1,669,320,000. The total of the national debts of the world, practically the whole being chargeable to war and militarism, is the colossal sum of $34,633,164,406." — *Benjamin F. Trueblood, LL.D.* Think how much good might be done by these vast sums; and remember that the reckoning does not include the intangible but vastly important damage of lowered national and personal ideals, the reign of hatred and suspicion in place of good will and helpfulness. And besides, who can estimate the loss to bereaved mothers and wives and orphaned children?

What is to take the place of war? An effective federation of the nations, such as might fitly be called "The United States of the World." It will have a world constitution, a world legislature, a world judiciary, and a world executive, just as individual nations now have these instruments of government. The duel is practically abolished in all civilized countries, and men are forbidden to settle their quarrels by force of arms. That international duel called war will soon be seen to be as foolish and wicked.

How can we inaugurate the reign of peace? By helping the peace societies do their noble work. By studying the question in Sunday schools and public schools. By an earnest advocacy and study of missions, which do more than anything else to cultivate the spirit of love for other peoples, and understanding of them. By protesting against the war spirit in Congress and against the appropriation of vast sums for unnecessary warships. (One battleship costs $10,000,000 to build and $1,000,000 a year to maintain, and is obsolete in 15 years.) By refusing to entertain prejudices against men of other races and nations, and in private conversations doing what we can to destroy those prejudices.



Peace Statue — The Christ of the Andes.

What are recent gains in the direction of international peace and federation? The establishment of the International Court of Arbitration at the Hague, which is the beginning of the world judiciary. The enacting by the nations of more than eighty treaties agreeing to submit disputes to the Hague Court for arbitration. The peaceful settlement of more than 600 international disputes, some of them most dangerous, such as that caused by the firing of the Russian fleet upon British fishing vessels in the North Sea. The establishing of the Central American High Court of Nations. The forming of the International Bureau of American Republics. The placing of a beautiful statue of Christ upon the summit of the Andes between Chile and Argentina, in token of their agreement not to fight each other. The forming of the Interparliamentary Union, a large body made up of members of the various national parliaments and congresses, working steadily for peace. The beginning of a world executive by the formation of many international bureaus, such as the Universal Postal Union, the International Bureau of Agriculture, and the International Committee of Weights and Measures. The growing opposition to war on the part of financial institutions and business men and on the part of organized labor. When the laboring men of the world declare that they will no longer serve in armies and the business men declare that they will no longer pay for war, this terrible curse will be at an end.

WHAT GREAT SOLDIERS HAVE SAID.

"The sight of a battlefield after the fight is enough to inspire princes with a love of peace and a horror of war." — *Napoleon I.*

"Although a soldier by profession, I have never felt any fondness for war, and I have never advocated it except as a means of peace." — *General U. S. Grant.*

"War is but an organized barbarism." — *Louis Bonaparte.*

"War ought never to be accepted until it is offered by the hand of necessity." — *Sir Philip Sidney.*

"The more I study the world, the more am I convinced of the inability of brute force to create anything durable." — *Napoleon at St. Helena.*

"War is a most detestable thing. If you had seen but one day of war, you would pray God that you might never see another." — *Duke of Wellington to Lord Shaftesbury.*

"There was never a time during my command when I would not have chosen some settlement by reason rather than the sword." — *General U. S. Grant.*

"My first wish is to see this plague to mankind banished from the earth and the whole world in peace." — *Washington.*

"War is hell." — *General Sherman.*

"By the next centennial, arbitration will rule the world." — *General Sheridan.*

LESSON X. — June 4.

ISRAEL'S PENITENCE AND GOD'S PARDON.—Hosea 14.

COMMIT vs. 4–6. READ Hosea 11–14.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger.* — NEH. 9: 17.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read Hosea 11–14, with special reference to the lesson.

2. Read the central message of Hosea, Hos. 6: 6, and note the use of the thought in other prophets, Isa. 1: 11–20; Mic. 6: 6–8; Jer. 7: 22, 23, and Christ's quotations of it, Matt. 9: 13; 12: 7.

3. Look up the other quotations from Hosea in the New Testament: Hos. 1: 10; 2: 1, 23 are quoted in Rom. 9: 25, 26; 1 Pet. 2: 10; Hos. 10: 8, quoted in Luke 23: 30; Rev. 6: 16; 9: 6; Hos. 11: 1, quoted in Matt. 2: 15; Hos. 13: 14, quoted in 1 Cor. 15: 55.

4. With v. 9 of our lesson compare Psa. 107: 43; Jer. 9: 12; Dan. 12: 10. As to God's ways, see Deut. 32: 4; Prov. 11: 5; 15: 19; Isa. 26: 7.

5. Note some of the chief Bible passages on God's forgiveness of sin: Gen. 8: 21; 18: 26; Ex. 20: 6; 34: 6, 7; Num. 14: 18–20; 2 Sam. 24: 14; Neh. 9: 17, 27–31; Psa. 85: 10; 103: 3–14; 106: 1; 145: 8, 9; Isa. 38: 17; 42: 3; 55: 7–9; Lam. 3: 22, 23, 31–33; Matt. 9: 2, 6; Luke 1: 78; 6: 36; 7: 47–50; 23: 42, 43; 2 Cor. 1: 3; 1 Tim. 1: 14, 16.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the class to read at home the entire book of Hosea. It can easily be read in half an hour. Ask them, as they read, to mark the verses that seem most striking, and compare in the class those thus selected.

Manual Work.—Have the scholars mark with an "Fg" in the margins of their Bible the chief passages on God's forgiveness of sin. See Inductive Study 5.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — The Prophet Hosea and His Message. Great Sentences in Hosea. What Is Repentance? When Can God Forgive? Notable Repentances among Bible Characters. Hosea's Message for Men of To-day.

Learn by Heart.—Vs. 4–6; Luke 15: 7; Acts 5: 30, 31.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time.— Hosea began to prophesy toward the close of the reign of Jeroboam II. in Israel, whose reign closed B.C. 792 (Beecher), or 763 (Hastings). His prophetic life extended into the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, who came to the throne (Beecher) B.C. 723, (Hastings) 727.

Place. — Hosea was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom.

Prophets. — Isaiah and Micah; perhaps Amos.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Eiselen's *Prophecy and the Prophets* and *The Minor Prophets.* Farrar's *The Minor Prophets.* Adeney in *Men of the Old Testament, Solomon to Jonah.* White's *The Twelve Minor Prophets.* Harper's *Amos and Hosea*, in *The International Critical Commentary.* Geikie's *Landmarks of Old Testament History.* Fine chapters in Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture.* Chapter in Maurice's *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament. A Biblical Introduction*, by Bennett and Adeney. Elmslie, in *Book by Book.* George Adam Smith, in *The Expositor's Bible.* Sermon by Moody, in *The Way to God.* Article by Davidson in *The Expositor*, First Series, Vol. IX., page 241.

Subject: Repentance and Forgiveness, in Nations and Individuals.

Introduction. — We are drawing toward the close of the long tragedy of the Northern Kingdom. God would not destroy the disobedient nation without a final appeal, and that appeal was made by Hosea. God is the same now as then, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," and still he gives all sinners ample oppor-

tunity to turn to him. What modern nation or what person does not need the lesson we are to study to-day? Let us use this outline:

I. HOSEA: THE PROPHET AND HIS MESSAGE.
II. AN APPEAL FOR REPENTANCE (vs. 1–3).
III. A PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION (vs. 4–8).
IV. A SUMMARY OF WISDOM (v. 9).
IF HOSEA WERE LIVING TO-DAY.

I. Hosea: the Prophet and His Message. — ***What does Hosea's name mean?*** "Salvation," being the same as that of the last king of Israel, Hoshea, and the original name of Joshua (=Jesus, "Jehovah is salvation").

When did Hosea live? He prophesied (Hos. 1: 1) in the days of the kings of Judah, Uzziah to Hezekiah, inclusive, and in the time of Jeroboam II., king of Israel. Jeroboam II. reigned (Beecher) from B.C. 832 to 792, (Hastings) B.C. 804–763, forty-one years. "Appearing toward the close of the reign of Jeroboam II., when the afterglow of prosperity under that monarch was beginning to fade away, he continued for sixty years to plead with his countrymen to cease to do evil and learn to do well." — *Geikie.*

Where did Hosea live? In the Northern Kingdom, as appears from "our king" (Hos. 7: 5) referring to a king of Israel, the special interest shown in the land, the intimate knowledge of it, and in other ways. (See Harper, *Internat. Crit. Com.*, pp. 202, 203.)

Hosea.
In Sargent's Frieze of the Prophets in the Boston Public Library.

What is known of Hosea's personal history? Only what we learn from his writings, that he was the son of a man named Beeri, and had a very sad home life. "It is commonly assumed that he was a layman, and like Amos no member of a prophetic guild, but called by a personal divine impulse to his public work. This is probably correct. A difficult reference in Hos. 9: 7, 8 suggests that, as might have been surely inferred, Hosea was exposed to the most maddening opposition and obduracy, if not also to treacherous and perilous attack." — *Elmslie.* But the principal fact known about Hosea is his domestic tragedy. "Hosea's wife was unfaithful to him. While she was still in his home she had three children of whom he was not the father. At last she left him altogether, and as a woman who behaved in this way was bound to sink, she became a common slave. Then Hosea took pity on her, bought her in the slave-market, took her back to his house — not as his wife again, that was impossible — some evils are irreparable even when forgiven; but as a miserable creature to be sheltered in peace for the remainder of her days. The occurrences must have been real. The main part of the story is too repulsive for any man of high tone to have invented it as a fancy portrait of an imaginary wife. There is nothing symbolical in the wife's name — Gomer the daughter of Diblaim — which is stated in quite a matter-of-fact way." — *Principal Adeney.*

What is the purpose of Hosea's prophecy? "Gomer and her children are types of Israel, its infidelity to Jehovah, whom it forsook for the Baalim, and its punishment, and ultimate forgiveness." — *Bennett.* The prophet looked over his country, and he saw many wives like his own, and traced their downfall to the licentious worship of idols. "His grief became his gospel. We may regard the stages of the process as two: first, when he was led to feel that his sorrow was the sorrow of the whole nation; and, second, when he

1. O Israel, [1] return unto the LORD thy God; [2] for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2. Take with you words, and (turn to / return unto) the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and (receive us graciously: / accept that which is good:) so will we render (the [3] calves of / as) the offering of our lips.

3. [4] As'shur shall not save us; [5] we will not ride upon horses: [6] neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: [7] for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

[1] Hos. 12 : 6.
[2] Hos. 13 : 9.
[3] Heb. 13 : 15.
[4] Jer. 31 : 18; Hos. 5 : 13.
[5] Deut. 17 : 16; Isa. 30 : 2, 16.
[6] V. 8; Hos. 2 : 17.
[7] Psa. 10 : 14.

comprehended that it was of a similar kind to the sorrow of God himself. How many a man has joined the public warfare against intemperance, because he was aroused to its national consequences by the ruin it had brought to his own home! Thus John Bright, mourning the death of his young wife, was addressed by Cobden: 'There are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger'; and Cobden persuaded the great statesman to labor for the repeal of the Corn Laws." — *George Adam Smith.* Thus it was the untimely death of Florence Crittenton that led her father to enter upon his great life-work for fallen girls and women. "The message of Hosea is very comprehensive, touching upon social and political questions as well as upon the moral and religious situation. The thought that God is love colors his teachings from beginning to end. A favorite expression of Hosea is 'loving-kindness.'" — *Professor Eiselen.* In the first three chapters this is brought out by picturing Jehovah as a loving and forgiving husband; in the rest of the book God is a loving Father and Israel is a prodigal son.

What are the characteristics of Hosea's style? "Every observer has noticed the almost incoherent character of his style, and the tragic pathos by which it is marked. His sentences are short and broken, and, so to speak, quivering. He is rapid, ejaculatory, epigrammatic, 'a man of emotion rather than of logic, a poet rather than a preacher.' Bishop Lowth compares his separate poems to scattered leaves of the Sibyl. 'Each verse,' says Dr. Pusey, 'forms a whole for itself, like one heavy toll in a funeral knell.'" — *Farrar.* Hosea is full of striking and oft-quoted sentences, which appear often in later prophets, as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, and often in the New Testament.

What is the outline of the book? It is very confused, but the first three chapters deal with the prophet's relation to his wife as a symbol of God's relation to his faithless people, and chapters 4–14, sometimes called "the Second Book of Hosea," contain the substance of his prophecies after the death of Jeroboam II. The last chapter, which we study to-day, is Hosea's peroration. "It is permeated by a spirit different from that of the preceding chapters; denunciation gives place to promise. V. 9 stands by itself as an epilogue to the whole book." — *Professor Eiselen.*

II. **An Appeal for Repentance.** — Vs. 1–3. ***What was the iniquity of Israel from which Hosea exhorted her to return unto the Lord?*** The degradation of religion into a sensual and revolting worship of idols, and the foolish and weakening separation from the Southern Kingdom. "The period was one of frightful violence and confusion: all ties of social life were loosened; immorality, irreligion, superstition, panic, and despair contributed to the common misery and ruin; it hardly needed prophetic insight to foresee the inevitable end in the total dissolution of the state." — *Professor Elmslie.*

Why is the sinner to take with him words when he returns to the Lord? Because "confession is better than sacrifice." "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation." **The calves of our lips** (the Septuagint and Syriac versions have "the fruit of our lips") are better than calves or bullocks laid upon an altar.

ILLUSTRATION. "As long as you have a bullet in your body you will never have a perfectly healthy body; and as long as you have an unconfessed sin in your soul you will not have a healthy soul. A lady once said to me, 'I am more irritable than I was five years ago. Can you help me?' I answered, 'The next time you are angry with a person, go and confess it, and ask forgiveness.' 'Oh,' she said, 'I shouldn't like to do that.' Of course not. I shouldn't like to take cod-liver oil, but I should do it to save my life." — *D. L. Moody.*

What were the people of Hosea's land urged by the prophet to confess? Their

4. I will heal [1] their backsliding, I will love them [2] freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

5. I will be as [3] the dew unto Israel: he shall grow blossom as the lily, and [a] cast forth his roots as Lĕb'a-non.

6. His branches [b] shall spread, and [4] his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and [5] his smell as Lĕb'a-non.

7. [6] They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and grow blossom as the vine: the [c] scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lĕb'a-non.

8. E'phrā-ĭm *shall say*, [7] What have I to do any more with idols? [8] I have heard him, answered, and observed will regard him: I am am like a green fir tree. From [9] from me is thy fruit found.

[1] Jer. 5: 6; Hos. 11: 7.
[2] Eph. 1: 6.
[3] Job 29: 19; Prov. 19: 12.
[4] Psa. 52: 8.
[5] Gen. 27: 27.
[6] Psa. 91: 1.
[7] V. 3.
[8] Jer. 31: 18.
[9] Jas. 1: 17.
a Heb., *strike.*
b Heb., *shall go.*
c Or, *memorial.*

reliance upon Assyria (**Asshur**) for salvation instead of upon Jehovah; their reliance upon Egypt, the land of **horses**; their reliance upon idols, **the work of their own hands.** All the inner woes of the nation sprung from its idolatry, and all its woes from without sprung from the mischievous foreign alliances against which the prophets continually protested. Note that this is more than a confession: it is a promise of amendment, a vow of total abstinence from these sins.

In what great hope and confidence were the people to approach God after their sinning? In the knowledge that in God **the fatherless findeth mercy.** The thought goes back to the name which Hosea had given to one of the children of his sinning wife, Lo-ammi, "Not My People." It was a self-orphaned nation that was to creep back, like the prodigal, to the Father. They had made themselves fatherless, but in God the fatherless find mercy.

"It is God: his love looks mighty,
But is mightier than it seems.
'Tis our Father, and his fondness
Goes far out beyond our dreams.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."
—*F. W. Faber.*

III. **A Promise of Forgiveness and Restoration.** — Vs. 4–8. Thus far the prophet has spoken, putting into the mouth of his people the words that they should speak to Jehovah. With v. 4 Jehovah himself replies. George Adam Smith translates it thus, removing many of the difficulties of the ordinary version:

I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely:
For mine anger is turned away from them.
I will be as the dew unto Israel:
He shall blossom as the lily,
And strike his roots deep as Lebanon;
His branches shall spread,
And his beauty shall be as the olive-tree,
And his smell as Lebanon.

MICAH:

They shall return and dwell in his shadow.
They shall live well-watered as a garden,
Till they flourish like the vine,
And be fragrant like the wine of Lebanon.

JEHOVAH:

Ephraim, what has he to do any more with idols!
I have spoken for him, and I will look after him.
I am like an ever-green fir;
From me is thy fruit found.

What is signified by the abrupt way in which Jehovah begins the dialogue? "The very abruptness of its introduction, without any explanation as to the speaker, suggests how swiftly and joyfully the Father hastens to meet the returning prodigal while he is yet afar off. Like pent-up waters rushing forth as soon as a barrier is taken away, God's love pours itself out immediately." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

ILLUSTRATION. We could not remain away from Christ if we realized his love for us. "A gentleman in Cornwall once met in the street a Christian whom he knew to be a backslider. He went up to him and said, 'Tell me, is there not some estrangement between you and the Lord Jesus?' The man hung his head and said, 'Yes.' 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'what has he done to you?' The answer to this was a flood of tears." — *Moody.*

From a Photograph by Bonfils.

Cedars of Lebanon.

What three things does God promise to the repentant nation? He promises (1) for the *past*, forgiveness: **I will heal their backsliding**, that horrible disease of apostasy from the Father's love; (2) for the *present*, love: **I will love them freely**, "without money and without price," for what price could pay for this inestimable blessing? (3) for the *future*, ever-increasing progress and blessedness: God will be to his restored people an enriching, stimulating, reviving dew, causing them to throw out new branches, strike new roots deeper into the soil, blossom in beauty and fragrance, and bring forth fruit in abundance.

Why is God compared to the dew? "The source of all fruitfulness is a divine influence, which comes silently and refreshing as the 'dew,' or, rather, as the 'night mist,' a phenomenon occurring in Palestine in summer, and being, accurately, rolling masses of vapor brought from the Mediterranean, which counteract the dry heat and keep vegetation alive. The influences which refresh and fructify our souls must fall in many a silent hour of meditation and communion." — *Maclaren.*

What is the significance of the three comparisons used of the restored people? 1. They are to be like the **lily**, in its purity and beauty. 2. They are to be like **Lebanon**, rooted deep in the earth, with its foothills stretching forth like roots; or perhaps the reference is to the firmly rooted *cedars* of Lebanon; at any rate the comparison signifies strength, which is to be added to beauty. 3. They are to be like the **olive tree**, which is not lovely as the lily but is gnarled and ugly; nor strong and imposing like the mountain and its great cedars, but feeble and insignificant to the eye; but it is green when other trees are bare, and it brings forth abundance of rich fruit.

Why is God compared to a fir tree (v. 8)? Probably the cypress is meant. It is evergreen and changeless, a shelter from the heat, a protection from the storm. It is fruitless, and therefore God adds, "From me is thy fruit found."

ILLUSTRATION. An old Jewish rabbi calls attention to the fact that the boughs of the cypress bend downward, and to the legend that the boughs of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden used to bend of their own accord to Adam's hand before his fall, but when he sinned they lifted themselves beyond his reach. So may there not be here some expression of the divine condescension, as shown in such pleadings as God made through the prophets, and most of all when he stooped to earth in the person of Jesus Christ?

What is the climax of this glorious passage? The confident statement (whether made by Jehovah, or, as some commentators and both the Authorized and Revised Versions hold, by Ephraim himself) that Ephraim (that is, Israel, the leading tribe being put for the

9. [1] Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things?* prudent, and he shall know them? for [2] the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but [the] transgressors shall fall therein.

[1] Psa. 107: 43; John 8: 47. [2] Prov. 10: 29; Luke 2: 34; 2 Cor. 2: 16.

entire Northern Kingdom) has nothing more to do with idols; he is through with them; they are laid away with his unhappy past. This actually happened after the exile; the returned Jews had had enough of idolatry, and never again lapsed into that sin.

What, then, did Hosea mean in his famous sentence (Hos. 4: 17), ***"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone"?*** Hosea certainly did not mean, as he is so often misunderstood to mean, that Israel was so firmly fixed in idolatry that the nation could never be moved from that iniquity. The prophet was addressing Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and bidding her hold aloof from her idolatrous neighbor and let him alone, lest she herself contract the foul disease.

IV. **A Summary of Wisdom.**—V. 9. ***What is the nature of v. 9?*** It is "an epilogue or conclusion to the prophecy, unspecializing it, as it were, and extracting, after the manner of Psa. 107: 43, the moral which underlies it all."—*Cambridge Bible.* "This, whether Hosea's own final word, or, as some scholars think, the comment of a later reader, is a fit ending to such a tale of mingled judgment and mercy as the prophet has unfolded."—*New Century Bible.*

What is the literary style of this conclusion? It is poetry, like the rest of Hosea's prophecies (chapter 1 is prose), and is a five-line stanza, thus arranged by Professor Cheyne:

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?
Prudent, and he shall know them?
For the ways of the Lord are right,
And the just shall walk in them:
But the transgressors shall fall therein.

What, then, is the sum of wisdom, according to Hosea? Wisdom consists of three things: (1) understanding, knowing the things that Hosea had been setting forth, namely, God's dealings with his children. Hosea, like Milton at the opening of *Paradise Lost*, might have prayed,

"That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

(2) Understanding that God's ways are always right, "straight," "alike when they spread themselves out in an unbroken level for the pious, and when they oppose themselves in rocky stumbling-blocks to the ungodly."—*Cambridge Bible.* (3) It is not

From a Photograph by Bonfils.

An Old Olive Tree.

enough to know what God's ways are, nor to understand that they are right ways; we must **walk in them.** "If ye know these things, happy are ye *if ye do them.*" (John 13: 17.)

"I asked the New Year for some motto sweet,
Some rule of life with which to guide my feet;
I asked and paused; he answered soft and low,
'God's will to know.'

"'Will knowledge then suffice, New Year?' I cried;
And ere the question into silence died
The answer came, 'Nay, but remember, too,
God's will to do.'

"Once more I asked, 'Is there no more to tell?'
And once again the answer sweetly fell:
'Yes, this one thing, all other things above,
God's will to love.'"

IF HOSEA WERE LIVING TO-DAY.

Would Hosea find need for his teachings at our time and in our country? "Such preaching as the tenth chapter of Hosea, or, indeed, as that of the prophets generally, is surely much needed in our own time; for how much better is London or New York, in many respects, than Samaria?" — *Geikie.*

At what point would Hosea begin his warnings? Probably at the point where we feel the most pride. "I am told that the only side upon which Edinburgh Castle was successfully assailed was where the rocks were steepest, and where the garrison thought themselves secure." — *D. L. Moody.* Our nation is proud of its wealth and power, but these two things lead to worldliness, which is our greatest peril.

ILLUSTRATION. "John Bunyan had a great dread of spiritual pride; and once, after he had preached a very fine sermon, and his friends crowded round to shake him by the hand, while they expressed the utmost admiration of his eloquence, he interrupted them, saying: 'Ay! you need not remind me of that, for the devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit!'" — *Southey.*

What would be the substance of Hosea's message to the nation and to each one of us? "Take with you words, and return unto the Lord." Our sins must be acknowledged, humbly before God and frankly before every one who should hear the confession for any reason. Then we are simply, in Christ's strength, to obey Sam Jones's oft-repeated injunction, "Quit your meanness!" We are to "cease to do evil, learn to do well."

ILLUSTRATION. We must turn *wholly* from our sin. "A certain village church possessed a fine-toned bell, of which the villagers were very proud. It became cracked, but a blacksmith riveted it so skilfully that the crack was invisible. The bell was rehung, but oh! the appalling discord when it was rung! It was taken down, and recast. The result was a new bell of sweeter tone than the old one. Man has devised many apparently clever schemes for the restoration of sin-diseased hearts. They are all failures. A new heart moulded by God himself is the only remedy."

And when is the time for this turning to God? NOW! "There is a story of an ancient king who lighted a lamp and had it hung in his palace; he then sent heralds forth to bring into his presence every criminal and rebel, that they might obtain pardon. Those that came while the lamp was burning were set free; but those that delayed till the lamp had gone out, or altogether neglected the invitation, met with a terrible death." Unlike this, God forever holds forth his offer of mercy, and his loving heart always yearns after the sinner; but with each wilful delay we harden our hearts till at last they are fixed in the ways of sin and it is impossible to turn from them to our Father. "*To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*"

"Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course.
Manhood with action follows; but 'tis dreary
To have to alter our whole life in age —
The time past, the strength gone." — *Robert Browning.*

"Lost time is lost eternity." — *Max Müller.*

LESSON XI. — June 11.

HEZEKIAH'S GREAT PASSOVER. — 2 Chronicles 30.

PRINT vs. 13-27. COMMIT vs. 18-20. READ 2 Chronicles 29-31.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*** — 1 SAM. 16: 7.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read 2 Chronicles 29–31. Read also the parallel passage, 2 Kings 18: 1–7.
2. Compare this reform with the reform under Jehoiada in the time of Joash, 2 Kings 11: 17—12: 15. Compare also the earlier reform under King Asa, 1 Kings 15: 11–15.
3. Read the law of the passover, Num. 9: 1–14; Lev. 23: 5–8; Ex. 23: 15.
4. Glance over the laws of the offerings, Leviticus 1–7.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Have the scholars read the three chapters, 2 Chronicles 29–31, and each make a list of the happenings that are chronicled. Make typewritten copies of the questions given in the following notes, and let the scholars have them as a guide to their home study.

Manual Work. — The scholars may copy a plan of the Temple which you will set before them. They may also copy an outline map of Palestine showing the tribal divisions. A sketch map of Jerusalem showing the Temple and the Kidron may also be copied by the class.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — The Reign of Ahaz. The Character of Hezekiah. Secrets of Hezekiah's Success. National Righteousness and National Power. How to Accomplish a Reform. Work for the Hezekiahs of To-day.

Learn by Heart. — Vs. 18–20; Rom. 6: 11; 2 Cor. 5: 17.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

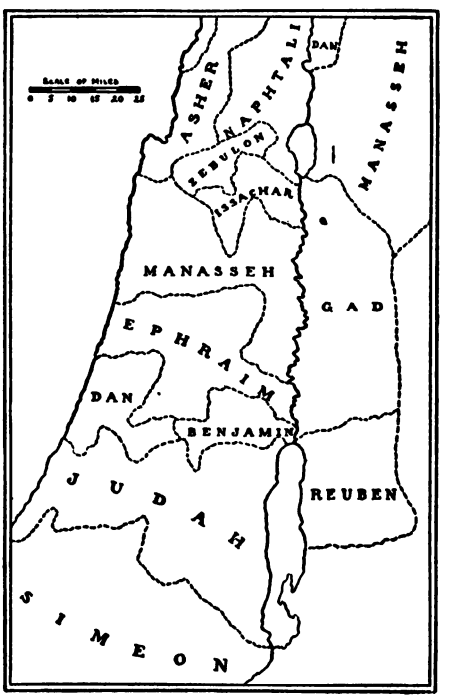
Sinker's *Hezekiah and His Age.* Maclaren's *Expositions of Holy Scripture.* Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church.* Rawlinson's *Kings of Israel and Judah.* Geikie's *Hours with the Bible.* Commentaries, especially *Expositor's, Pulpit, Ellicott's,* and *Speaker's.*

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Beecher's dates for the accessions of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah are B.C. 754, 738, and 723, Hoshea becoming king of Israel in B.C. 726. Hastings gives the dates as B.C. 749, 741, 727, and (Hoshea) 730.

Place. — The Temple in Jerusalem.

Prophets. — Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah.



An Ancient Reform, with Its Suggestions for Reforms To-day, in Our Nation and in Our Own Lives.

Introduction. — After four lessons with the prophets of the time, we return to the history of the Hebrews, which we left at the close of the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah.

Who succeeded Uzziah? His son Jotham ("Jehovah is perfect"), who had already reigned for perhaps twelve years as regent since his father had become a leper. Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah were all prophesying in his reign. He was a pious king and built the upper gate of the Temple, but did not interfere with the idolatry of the people. He conquered the Ammonites, but at the close of his reign the allied Syrians and Israelites began the invasion of Judah that was to mean so much trouble for the nation.

What king succeeded Jotham? His son Ahaz ("he has grasped"), the evil son of a good father. See 2 Chronicles 28; 2 Kings 16. Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah prophesied through all his reign. Ahaz fell into the darkest idolatry, even causing his son to pass through the fire. Politically, against the strenuous advice of Isaiah, he called in the aid of Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, when Judah was attacked by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel. Tiglath-pileser overran Samaria and connived at the murder of Pekah and the enthronement of Hoshea, the last king of Israel. He attacked Damascus and slew Rezin. All this he would doubtless have done in any event, to put down the two upstart nations, and it was not necessary for Ahaz to place himself under obligations to Assyria. As it was, the foolish king of Judah was obliged to pay for his assistance with his palace treasures and the treasures of the Temple, besides becoming his vassal. In this capacity he went to Damascus to do homage, and while there he fell in love with a heathen altar, which he copied when he returned home, putting it in place of the sacred brazen altar of the Temple. It was to Ahaz that Isaiah spoke the famous prophecy of Immanuel (Isa. 7: 1–16). "In character Ahaz was weak yet obstinate, frivolous and something of a dilettante, as we gather from his interest in his new altar, and from the association of his name with a dial or step-clock (2 Kings 20: 11)." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.*

What was the state of affairs under Ahaz and at the accession of Hezekiah? "The terrible picture of the condition of Judah, painted in Isaiah 2–5 and other prophecies of this time, is clear as to the idolatry, drunkenness, luxury, oppression, perversion of justice, grasping avarice, and shamelessness that poisoned the national life." — *Hastings.* "The necessity of raising a heavy annual tribute for the Assyrians pressed very heavily upon the poorer classes in Judah — for in the East the poor are usually the real tax-payers — and greatly aggravated the social miseries which were already crying for redress." — *Ottley.*

What, then, will be the bearing of our lesson upon our life of to-day? It will show us a noble young man confronted with the most discouraging conditions, and will tell how he met them wisely and bravely. The young men and women of to-day have many similar evils to fight, and an equal chance for heroism. Let us therefore study:

SUBJECT: AN ANCIENT REFORM, WITH ITS SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORMS TO-DAY, IN OUR NATION AND IN OUR OWN LIVES.

I. HEZEKIAH'S GOOD START (2 Chron. 29: 1–11).

II. THE FIRST STEP: THE CLEANSING (2 Chron. 29: 12–19).

III. THE SECOND STEP: THE WORSHIP AND PRAISE (2 Chron. 29: 20–36).

IV. THE THIRD STEP: THE WIDE INVITATION (vs. 1–12).

V. THE FOURTH STEP: THE GREAT PASSOVER (vs. 13–27).

VI. THE FIFTH STEP: THE GENEROUS GIVING (2 Chronicles 31).

I. **Hezekiah's Good Start.** — 2 Chron. 29: 1–11. ***What is the meaning of Hezekiah's name?*** "Jehovah strengthens," — a fitting name.

What sort of training had he? He was the good son of a bad father, Ahaz; and Ahaz was the bad son of a good father, Jotham; and after the good Hezekiah came his bad son, Manasseh. But there must have been reasons back of these seeming contradictions. In Hezekiah's case one may have been his mother, Abijah the daughter (or granddaughter) of Zechariah. Twenty-nine Zechariahs are mentioned in the Bible. This was not the author of the book of prophecy, but may have been the prophet who had so much influence over King Uzziah (2 Chron. 26: 5). Isaiah also, who was so influential in Hezekiah's reign, may have been a leading factor in the lad's education.

13. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

14. And they arose and took away the [1]altars that were in Jerusalem, and were
all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into them
the brook Kid'ron.

15. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the second month: and the priests and the Lē'vītes were [2]ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the LORD.

16. And they stood in [a] their place after their manner, according to the order,
law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, *which they received* of the hand of the Lē'vītes.

17. For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: there were had
themselves: [3]therefore the Lē'vītes had the charge of the killing of the pass-
overs for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the LORD. that was them

[1] 2 Chron. 28: 24.
[2] 2 Chron. 29: 34.
[3] 2 Chron. 29: 34.
[a] Heb., *their standing*.

ILLUSTRATION. "The history of England is full of such surprises — the greatest of the Plantagenets, Edward I., the son of the feeble and vacillating Henry III.; or conversely, the gentle recluse Henry VI., the son of the hardy victor of Agincourt." — *Sinker.*

How are Hezekiah's character and reign summed up? "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord." God's approval is the only wise goal, for a king, a president, or the humblest citizen. "It is the fatal defect in most forms of government that this overrule of God is ignored. Legislators and diplomats discuss policies and expediences, and make little account of righteousness; and yet, from the beginning until now, it has been proved that nothing but righteousness exalts a nation. American statesmen and great political parties sneered at the idea of the 'higher law,' and God smote the nation with judgment and rent asunder the union." — *Rev. Edward S. Atwood, D.D.*, in *Monday Club Sermons.*

How did Hezekiah begin his reign? By doing the thing that plainly needed most to be done first. He found the Temple, the sacred meeting-place of God and man, with its doors closed by Ahaz, its lamps out, its altars cold, its floors and hangings covered with dust and dirt. Therefore the young king summoned the priests and Levites to the court on the east of the Temple opposite the closed porch (v. 7) or entrance, and in a frank and noble address declared his conviction that all the national woes had their origin in a neglect of the worship of Jehovah, and his determination to make a new covenant with the Lord. Then he bade them, as their first task, to cleanse the Temple thoroughly.

ILLUSTRATION. "Had Hezekiah lived in the 'fifties,' the rooted rights of slaveholders would have had no terrors for him. Had he lived to-day, the 'vested rights' of the liquor-dealer, protected as they are by immemorial antiquity, would not have prevented him from raising his voice against the saloon and all its terrible train of woes." — *Francis E. Clark, D.D., LL.D.*

What does the time Hezekiah took for his reform show about his character? It indicates his zeal, courage, and vigor. He was young, only twenty-five; but he did not put it off till he was older. It was in the very first month of his reign, but he did not wait till he had strengthened his power and won popularity. "We can never begin good things too early, and when we come into new positions it is always prudence as well as bravery to show our colors unmistakably from the first. Many a young man, launched among fresh associations, has been ruined because of beginning with temporizing timidity. It is easier to take the right standing at first than to shift to it afterwards." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

ILLUSTRATION. Whittier, who certainly practised what he preached, gave a young poet, a friend of mine, the advice to "attach himself when young to some great, unpopular cause, and grow up into success with it."

II. **The First Step: the Cleansing.** — 2 Chron. 29: 12–19. ***In carrying out Hezekiah's commands, what did the priests and Levites do first?*** They sanctified themselves, making their bodies pure from all defilement. Said Isaiah (Isa. 52: 11), "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." No one can help to make the world right until he him-

18. For a multitude of the people, even even [1] many of E'phrā-ĭm· and Manăs'seh, Is'sa-char· and Zĕb'u-lun, had not cleansed themselves, [2] yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was is written. But For Hĕz-e-kī'ah had prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one

19. That that [3] prepareth setteth his heart to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, though *he be* not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary.

20. And the LORD hearkened to Hĕz-e-kī'ah, and healed the people.

21. And the children of Israel that were [a] present at Jerusalem· kept [4] the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Lē'vītes and the priests praised the LORD day by day, *singing* with [b] loud instruments unto the LORD.

22. And Hĕz-e-kī'ah spake [c] comfortably unto all the Lē'vītes [5] that taught the good knowledge were well skilled *in the service* of the LORD: and so they did eat throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace offerings, and [6] making confession to the LORD, the God of their fathers.

23. And the whole assembly congregation took counsel to keep [7] other seven days: and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.

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[1] V. 11.
[2] Ex. 12: 43.
[3] 2 Chron. 19: 3.
[4] Ex. 12: 15.
[5] Deut. 33: 10; 2 Chron. 17: 9.
[6] Ezra 10: 11.
[7] 1 Kings 8: 65.

a Heb., *found.*
b Heb., *instruments of strength.*
c Heb., *to the heart of all,* Isa. 40: 2.

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self is right. The physician must not need healing; the reformer, reforming. "Purity is power." — *A. J. Gordon.*

"My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure." — *Tennyson.*

ILLUSTRATION. Let every young man keep himself pure, in the knowledge that God has some high destiny for him. Dr. Robinson saw his dragoman pick up a blank piece of soiled paper, look it over carefully, and then fold it and put it away. "Why do you keep that paper?" asked Dr. Robinson. "The name of God is not upon it." "No," said the dragoman, "but it may be some day."

How was the Temple cleansed? The Levites began with the outer courts and spent eight days in carrying out the refuse. Then the priests entered the Temple proper, and eight more days were spent in making it thoroughly clean, including the Temple utensils and furniture. The "uncleanness" that was brought out included the idols that had been set up there, and all the appurtenances of idolatry.

APPLICATION. "No fair hand was doing that week in Jerusalem any work of refinement that more graced its owner than did the hands of those Levites as they stripped the false altar of its clothing, or as they swept the accumulated dust from the courts of the sanctuary. Let us not despise any true work of any kind." — *Clarkson.*

III. **The Second Step: the Worship and Praise.** — 2 Chron. 29: 20–36. Thus far the priests and Levites alone had been purified. Now the royal house and the people were to be formally reconciled to Jehovah. ***How was this done?*** Hezekiah gathered the chief men of Jerusalem, who brought bullocks, lambs, rams, and he-goats for a sin offering, seven of each. The city rulers laid their hands upon the animals, thus identifying themselves with them. Then the priests killed the animals and sprinkled their blood before the veil in the Holy Place and upon the altar of incense, pouring out the remainder at the base of the altar of burnt offerings in the court before the Temple. The fat of the offerings was burned on the altar of burnt offerings, and the flesh was afterwards eaten by the priests. It was a mark of the new national feeling that arose during Hezekiah's reign that this offering and those that followed were made not for Judah alone, but for the Northern Kingdom as well.

What was the second part of the atonement? The offering of burnt offerings, or "whole" offerings, the entire body of each victim being burned on the great altar in the court. This was to express the idea of entire consecration.

What other important division of worship was inaugurated in connection with the burnt offerings? Vocal and instrumental music. The Levites, while the offerings were

24. For Hĕz-e-kī'ah king of Jū'dah [a][1] did give to the congregation for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests [2] sanctified themselves.

25. And all the congregation of Jū'dah, with the priests and the Lē'vītes, and all the congregation [3] that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Jū'dah, rejoiced.

26. So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Sŏl'-o-mon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

[1] 2 Chron. 35: 7, 8.
[2] 2 Chron. 29: 34.
[3] Vs. 11, 18.
a Heb., *lifted up*, or, *offered*.

burning, sang the psalms of David and of Asaph, David's musician, whose name stands at the head of twelve of the Psalms. They accompanied themselves with cymbals, psalteries (harps), and harps (lyres or lutes). In addition, the priests sounded trumpets.

MUSIC IN WORSHIP. "Words are clumsy instruments for the expression of the heart, and are least efficient when they undertake to set forth moral and spiritual ideas. Music can transcend mere speech in touching the soul to fine issues, suggesting visions of things ineffable and unseen. Browning makes Abt Vogler say of the most enduring and supreme hopes that God has granted to men, 'Tis we musicians know'; but the message of music comes home with power to many who have no skill in its art." — *George Adam Smith.*

What was the third part of the ceremony? There was something for the general congregation to do, as there should be in all worship. They were invited to bring thank offerings, called also peace offerings, the fat of which was burned, and a portion of the flesh was waved symbolically toward the altar by the priests, being afterwards eaten by them. The remainder of the flesh was eaten by the people, who, being now purified, could thus partake with Jehovah in this symbolical meal of communion and reconciliation. In addition to these thank offerings, many of the congregation, being "of a willing heart," brought burnt offerings, accompanied, as always, with the drink or wine offerings, which were poured out at the base of the altar where the animals were burning.

What was the chief cause of the rejoicing? That God's hand was plainly in the matter (2 Chron. 29: 36). It had all been done so suddenly, without preparation, that it was evidently the spontaneous movement of men's hearts in obedience to the Spirit of God. It was what is called in our day the revival spirit. "Revivals," it has been said, "are not 'got up,' they come down from above"; and the same is true of all reform movements that are to endure.

IV. **The Third Step: the Wide Invitation.**—Vs. 1–12. ***What was the next step in the great reform?*** The holding of the national feast of remembrance of God's goodness, the passover. This should have been celebrated in the first month of the year, Nisan, corresponding to our April; but because not enough of the priests had been purified and because of the time required to gather the people, it was decided that the exigency warranted the postponement to the next month, Iyar or May.

How wide an invitation was given? As the reform had widened from Hezekiah to the priests and Levites, then to the chief men of Jerusalem, then to the whole congregation of citizens, the next step was to extend it to the entire nation, from **Beer-sheba** in the extreme south, **even to Dan,** in the extreme north. This was a notable approach to national reunion, to the healing of the breach made after Solomon's death two centuries before. It is thus with all reforms: they must begin in the heart of one man, but it is not the true spirit of reform unless it continually widens out. "The first year of Hezekiah was the third of Hoshea, the last king of Samaria, who is described as a better king than his predecessors. Doubtless,

Altar of Burnt Offering.

27. Then the priests the Lē'vītes arose and [1] blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came *up* to his holy *dwelling place, even habitation, even* unto heaven.

[1] Num. 6: 23.

therefore, Hoshea did not actively oppose Hezekiah's wish for a really national passover." — *Ellicott.*

How was the invitation sent? By **posts**, or runners, who were probably soldiers of the royal body-guard. This was the swiftest way of conveying tidings known to those days, though in more level countries the messengers were sometimes mounted on horses.

Where did they go? Passing through Judah, they came to Ephraim and Manasseh, the Samaria of the time of Christ. They went as far as Zebulun, the Galilee of Christ's time, but it is not said that they went as far north as Dan. However, some from Asher, north of Zebulun, heard the message in some way, and accepted it (v. 11).

What were the terms of the invitation? It was an appeal (1) to *memory*, recalling Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the goodness of Jehovah, the glorious history of the Temple, and the many rebellions of the people against their God; (2) to *fear*, reminding them of the Assyrian inroad under Tiglath-pileser and the sad fate of their fellow idolaters whom their gods had not saved from being carried away captive into Assyria; (3) to *hope*, promising them that if they should return to Jehovah, he would forgive them and bring back their relatives from the land of their exile. Thus the past, the present, and the future were drawn upon for motives to reform; and the wise modern reformer makes use of all three arguments.

How was the invitation received? For the most part, the messengers were mocked, and laughed to scorn. Thus was it always among the Hebrews, as Stephen said in his bold address: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Thus has it been with all reformers, like Luther, Knox, Wesley, Howard, Garrison. Still, there were some that accepted the invitation, men of at least five of the northern tribes (vs. 11, 18), while Judah was unanimous (v. 12) for the reform. "So, alas! is it with the better message, which is either 'a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.' The same fire melts wax and hardens clay." — *Alexander Maclaren, D.D.*

V. **The Fourth Step: the Great Passover.** — Vs. 13–27. ***What further purification was needed before the passover could be celebrated?*** Jerusalem was full of heathen altars "in every corner" (2 Chron. 28: 24), and these were torn down and the fragments cast into the Kidron.

Why were not these destroyed when the Temple was cleansed? Hezekiah showed himself a wise reformer in doing constructive work as soon as possible, knowing that the seeds of true religion, springing up, would of themselves drive away the poisonous weeds of idolatry. Thus a wise teacher will not discuss doubtful amusements with a young convert, knowing that a life once thoroughly consecrated to God will have no place for any doubtful practice.

From a Photograph by Wilson.

The Valley of the Kidron.

What other example of Hezekiah's wisdom in dealing with men is given? His leniency with the men from the north, who, being long unaccustomed to the services of the Temple and ignorant of their laws, ate the passover without going through the

elaborate ceremonial purifications which the law required. Hezekiah wisely allowed this, praying God to pardon the breach in the outward form since the heart was right. May all that are seeking to lead others in the way of God learn thus to distinguish the essential from the non-essential! Too often, even in our day, sincere reformers are kept apart because each is insisting upon having his own way in such matters as organization, name, and methods of work.

What evidence did the people give of their zeal for the new order of things? Not satisfied with keeping the feast for the usual seven days, they extended it for seven days more; and the animals given to the people by the king and the nobles were so numerous that they sufficed for the additional week. Thus when Solomon dedicated the Temple the people in their joy continued the Feast of Tabernacles for two weeks. It is the freewill offerings that constitute the most blessed gifts. A spring is known by its overflow. When a Christian begins to do more than his mere duty Christ can cease to call him servant and begin to call him friend. A reform is well-nigh completed when it brings forth such unforced and eager action as this.

VI. **The Fifth Step: the Generous Giving.** — 2 Chronicles 31. ***What other illustration of their zeal did the people give when the passover was completed?*** Their new ardor for Jehovah blazed out in a burning indignation against the foul idols which they had been worshiping. It was as when "Peter the Hermit aroused whole multitudes to the wildest enthusiasm for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, or even the dour Scotch Lowlander blazed up like an excitable Celt at the initiative of Jenny Geddes. How much more these fiery Orientals? Jerusalem had been freed from idols; why should the country districts still be polluted?" — *Robert Sinker, D.D.* Thus the people swept like a flood over Judah and Benjamin and the neighboring Ephraim and Manasseh. They broke the heathen "images" or pillars, cut down the "groves" or poles set up as symbols of the licentious Asherah, and overthrew the idolatrous hill sanctuaries and their altars. At the same time (2 Kings 18: 4) even that sacred national relic, the brazen serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness, was broken in pieces because it had come to be worshiped as an idol.

ILLUSTRATION. Reforms must be thorough, if they are to be permanent. If a man should sell a farm, but reserve from the sale the furthest corner of it, the law would give him a right of way from the highway clear through that farm to his corner. Thus if we yield our hearts to God, all but a "little" sin in the farthest corner, Satan has a right of way clear through our hearts to that corner.

What was the last step in Hezekiah's reform? The step which every reform must take before it is complete, that of permanent organization. The courses of priests and Levites for service in the Temple had to be restored, and provision had to be made for their support. In this last Hezekiah set a splendid example, for out of his own revenues he provided for all the daily and special sacrifices of importance, calling on the people to support the priests themselves. This summons met with a ready response, and the people brought great heaps of food of all sorts, so that chambers in the Temple had to be set apart for the ever-increasing surplus.

What was the significance of these gifts? They proved the reality of the conversion of the givers. No reform is on a firm foundation till it touches the purse. "Money is power in the concrete. It is the modern miracle-worker. For Christians to apprehend their true relations to money is to find the key to many of the great problems now pressing for solution." — *Josiah Strong.* Money is consolidated life. A dollar stands for time and thought and energy. In giving money to God a man is in a very real sense giving a part of himself.

What is the secret of Hezekiah's power over men and success in the service of God? It is expressed in the noble words with which the chronicler closes his account of the great reformation:

In every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered. — 2 CHRON. 31: 21.

LESSON XII. — June 18.

THE DOWNFALL OF SAMARIA. — 2 Kings 17 : 1–18.

PRINT vs. 1-14. COMMIT v. 14. READ 2 Kings 16, 17.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* — PROV. 29: 1.

INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE LESSON.

1. Read the entire chapter, 2 Kings 17.
2. Read the account of Hoshea's accession to the throne, 2 Kings 15: 30.
3. Compare with this account of Hoshea's faithlessness what Ezekiel says of Zedekiah, Ezek. 17: 11–21.
4. Read the duplicate account, 2 Kings 18: 9–12.
5. In regard to the "tower of the watchmen" (v. 9) see 2 Chron. 26: 10; 27: 4.
6. Concerning "hardened their necks" (v. 14), see Psa. 75: 5; Acts 7: 51.
7. For a play on words like that in v. 15 see Jer. 2: 5.
8. For a commentary on the entire lesson read Deut. 18: 9–19; 29: 10–29; 30: 15–20.
9. In regard to trust in Egypt see Deut. 17: 16; Isa. 30: 2, 3; 31: 1; 36: 6; Ezek. 29: 6, 7.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

How to Get Home Study. — Ask the scholars to look up in the Bible dictionaries and encyclopædias all the proper names in the lesson, adding that of Sargon II. Ask them to make a diagram of the two and one-half centuries of the history of the Northern Kingdom, dividing the period into decades, and writing the principal events in their places. Ask them to summarize vs. 7–18 by placing in one column a list of what God had done for the Northern Kingdom and in the opposite column what the people had done in return.

Manual Work. — The class may be set to copying an outline map showing Palestine and the regions to which the exiles were taken, marking the distances on dotted lines.

Topics for Brief Essays or Class Discussions. — The Character of Hoshea. Hoshea's Name and the Famous Persons Who Have Borne It. Sketches of Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, Sargon, and So. Why Samaria Was Captured. The Results of Disobeying God.

Learn by Heart. — V. 14; Deut. 30: 17, 18; Matt. 3: 10.

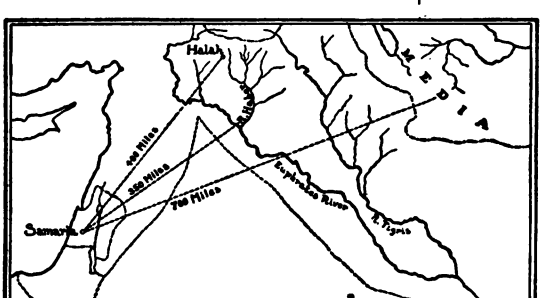
THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Hoshea became king in the twelfth year of Ahaz (2 Kings 17: 1), B.C. 726 (Beecher), 730 (Hastings). Samaria fell B.C. 718 (Beecher), 722 (Hastings).

Place. — Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, about 35 miles north of Jerusalem.

Kings. — Hezekiah in Judah, carrying out his reforms. In Assyria and Babylon, Shalmaneser IV., followed by Sargon II. in Assyria and Merodach-baladan in Babylon. In Egypt, Sabako (So).

Prophets. — Isaiah, and perhaps Hosea and Micah.



THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Histories of the Hebrews, especially those by Prof. H. P. Smith, Stanley, Milman, Wade, and Geikie. *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, by Prof. R. W. Rogers. Commentaries on Second Kings, especially *The Expositor's Bible*, *The Cambridge Bible*, Dummelow, and the chapter in Dr. Maclaren's *Expositions*. For illustrations see Bunyan's *Holy War*.

1. In the twelfth year of A'hăz king of Jū'dah began [1] Ho-shē'a the son of E'lah to reign in Sa-mā'rĭ-a over Israel, *and reigned* nine years.

2. And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

3. Against him came up [2] Shăl-man-ē'ser king of As-syr'ĭ-a; and Ho-shē'a became his servant, and *gave* him [a] presents.

4. And the king of As-syr'ĭ-a found conspiracy in Ho-shē'a: for he had sent messengers to Sō king of E'gypt, and *brought* no present to the king of As-syr'ĭ-a, as *he had done* year by year: therefore the king of As-syr'ĭ-a shut him up, and bound him in prison.

[1] 2 Kings 15: 30. [2] 2 Kings 18: 9. [a] Or, *tribute*.

The Doom of Israel, with Its Solemn Warnings for All That Disobey God.

Introduction.— ***What is the central teaching of the terrible event we are to study?*** "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Nothing is more necessary to learn as the foundation of a wise life than the fearful ruin that follows rebellion against God. Nowhere in the world's history is this more plainly shown than in to-day's lesson. Therefore it is one of the most valuable lessons we could possibly study, and an especially impressive close for our quarter. The outline is:

I. THE LAST KING OF ISRAEL (vs. 1, 2).
II. HOSHEA IN PRISON (vs. 3, 4).
III. THE CAPTURE OF SAMARIA (vs. 5, 6).
IV. THE CAUSE OF THE CATASTROPHE (vs. 7–18).
OUR SAMARIAS AND HOW TO PRESERVE THEM.

I. **The Last King of Israel.** — Vs. 1, 2. ***What does Hoshea's name signify?*** "Save," having the same meaning as the name of the northern prophet, Hosea. "Joshua" and "Jesus" are the same word, with Jah, Jehovah, added —"Jehovah saves." The name of this last king of Israel was therefore a token of the condition of his country, crying out for salvation, but knowing not the only Saviour, the Lord Almighty.

In what directions had Israel sought safety? *First*, in the direction of Syria to the north. Pekah, Hoshea's predecessor, had joined with Rezin, king of Syria, in an attack on Ahaz, king of Judah. *Second* (v. 4), in an alliance with Egypt to the south. *Third*, in subservience to Assyria on the east. The prophets urged the true policy of the Hebrews, which was to maintain themselves, under the protection of Jehovah, as an independent state, neutral amid the quarrels of their neighbors, and secure like Switzerland in their rocky fastnesses. But the prophets' wisdom was unheeded.

What was the character of Hoshea? The implication of v. 2 is that, though he allowed the practices of idolatry and the other evils of his predecessors, yet he was a better man than they. Perhaps the teachings of Hosea had reached his heart. "About his personal character we know little. We may infer that it lacked decisive energy and lofty patriotism. Beginning his reign as a mere puppet in Assyria's hands, he shaped his career as an opportunist. He was too astute to offend any national susceptibilities by abandoning the worship of Jehovah, too cautious and politic to play the rôle of a purist in religious practices. The impartial historian will not judge this last king of Ephraim too severely, but will unhesitatingly admit that he lived in times of direst difficulty and peril, when nothing but miraculous divinely guided statesmanship, like that of Isaiah, could have saved the realm from overwhelming disaster." — *Hastings's Bible Dictionary.*

TOO LATE. The Northern Kingdom had had its chance, and had thrown it away. "There is less hope for us each year and day we live in sin. Every hour we are drifting out to sea — the helpless, helmless bark is leaving the lessening shore farther and farther behind. Our disease becomes incurable. Like those stones which, though soft as clay on being raised from the quarry, grow hard as flint through exposure to the weather, our hearts are growing harder day by day." — *Guthrie.*

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light." — *Lowell.*

5. Then [1] the king of As-syr'ĭ-a came up throughout all the land, and went up to Sa-mā'rĭ-a, and besieged it three years.

[1] 2 Kings 18: 9.

II. **Hoshea in Prison.** — Vs. 3, 4. ***How had Hoshea obtained his throne?*** There is an inscription of the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser, which reads: "Pekah I slew, Hoshea I appointed over them." Pekah seems to have been opposed to Assyrian dominion, and when the forces of Tigleth-pileser approached Samaria in their retaliatory expedition Hoshea put himself at the head of the pro-Assyrian faction, slew Pekah, and obtained the throne from the Assyrians as his reward.

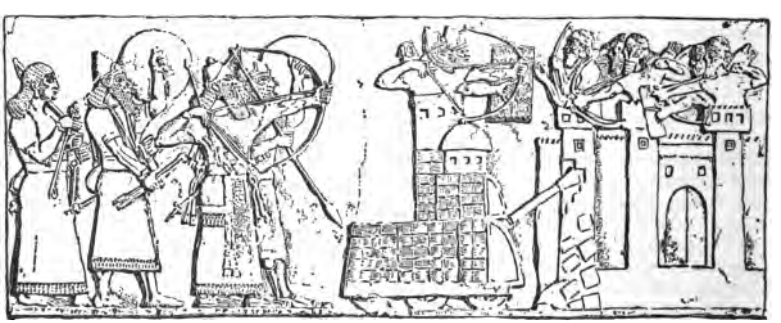
What change in Assyrian affairs came about? The accession of Shalmaneser IV. Tiglath-pileser III. was a very energetic and sagacious ruler, and there was no hope of a successful rebellion against him; but this new ruler was untried, and possibly his character was weak, though little is known about his brief reign of five years. At any rate, after paying tribute for two years, Hoshea thought he saw a chance of freedom from this subserviency.

What was that chance? Alliance with Egypt against Assyria. "Egypt was a name to conjure with in Palestine. Its early power and wealth had laid upon its neighbors a spell that was never removed. Their repeated disappointments seemed to make them no wiser. At about the period now under consideration Egypt was showing new activity. The king, whose name is So, according to the traditional Hebrew text, is probably to be identified with the Sabako of the Egyptian records. He was an energetic prince of Ethiopian origin, who succeeded in bringing all Egypt under his sway. His career might well make an impression on Hosea."— *Prof. H. P. Smith.*

What was the result of this dependence upon Egypt? The siege and capture of Samaria, and the fall and imprisonment of Hoshea, all of which is related more fully in the following verses. "The ultimate result is mentioned at once, before the steps by which it was accomplished are related."— *Pulpit Commentary.*

FOOLISH TRUST. Hoshea's imprisonment is a fair sample of the result of dependence upon men rather than God. Trust in Egypt was Israel's snare from the first. The prophets compared it to trusting in a shadow or making a staff out of a bruised reed. "The bankrupt who asks a bankrupt to set him up in business again is only losing time. The prisoner does not beg his fellow prisoner to set him free. The shipwrecked sailor does not call upon his shipwrecked comrade to place him safe ashore."— *Ryle.* In our troubles we are not to scorn the aid of men, but we are to know that without God's favor and assistance all human help is vain.

III. **The Capture of Samaria.** — Vs. 5, 6. ***What measures did Shalmaneser take to reduce to submission his rebellious vassal?*** He sent (or led in person) an army against him. Professor Rogers thinks that Hoshea marched out to meet this army, and was then captured and sent to Assyria as a prisoner. At any rate, "Samaria prepared for a siege. There is something heroic in the very thought. It was surrounded and hemmed in by territory over which it had once ruled in undisputed sway, but which had long been controlled by Assyrian governors and filled with Assyrian colonists. As Shalmaneser advanced



From a Cast in the Boston Art Museum.

Assyrian King Besieging a City.

6. [1] In the ninth year of Ho-shē'a the king of As-syr'ĭ-a took Sa-mā'rĭ-a, and [2] carried Israel away *into unto* As-syr'ĭ-a, [3] and placed them in Hā'lah and in Hā'bor *by on* the river of Gō'zan, and in the cities of the Mēdes.

[1] 2 Kings 18: 10; Hos. 13: 16. [2] Lev. 26: 32; Deut. 28: 36. [3] 1 Chron. 5: 26.

closer he would, of course, destroy and lay waste everything about the city which might have furnished any aid or comfort to it. From the villages and towns thus destroyed the people would flock into the capital until it was crowded.

The people of Samaria may have hoped for help from Egypt, watching with sick hearts for signs of an approaching army of succor. They knew what surrender meant in the loss of their city, and in probable deportation to strange lands. They were fighting to the bitter end for homes and for life. So they resisted — and the story is amazing — for three long years." — *Prof. R. W. Rogers.*

Assyrian Archers.

What was the inevitable result? The fall of the city, which occurred in the ninth year of Hoshea. The Bible does not name the victorious monarch, for during the siege Shalmaneser had died and Sargon II. had come to the throne. Probably some Assyrian general captured the city, though Sargon in his inscriptions enrolled it among his conquests.

What befell the people of Samaria? The Assyrian records state that 27,290 of the inhabitants were carried into captivity. They were settled in the city or district of Halah and on the river Habor, in Gozan, a province in northern Mesopotamia, between the upper portions of the Tigris and Euphrates, and also in Media, the western part of modern Persia. Samaria was not destroyed, but continued to be an important city. The fate of Hoshea is not recorded. The Northern Kingdom, however, had perished, after a troubled existence of two and one-half centuries.

IV. **The Cause of the Catastrophe.** — Vs. 7–18. ***Why might the Northern Kingdom have been expected to survive the kingdom of Judah?*** It was "the greater, richer, and more flourishing part of the land. The Northern Kingdom had, up to this time, produced the greatest and most numerous prophets — Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Nahum, and many more. Israel had also been superior in prowess and in deeds of war." — *Farrar.*

What, then, caused the downfall of Israel? The writer of Second Kings paints a terrible picture of a disobedient nation. It is full of sad contrasts, God's goodness on the one side, the people's ungrateful folly on the other:

WHAT GOD HAD DONE:

By a marvelous deliverance, he had brought them out of their bondage in Egypt (v. 7).

He had driven out the Canaanites from before them (v. 8).

He had given them the commandments, and full and wise laws (vs. 13, 15).

He had made a covenant with them, over and over, promising them all blessings if they would obey him (v. 15).

He had sent to them the prophets and seers, the best and wisest of men, to declare his will and lead them in the right way (v. 13).

WHAT ISRAEL HAD DONE:

They had fallen into a worse bondage, becoming slaves of an abominable idolatry.

They had fallen to worshiping the very gods of the Canaanites, thus proved powerless (v. 11).

They had broken the commandments, especially the most solemn and important, that against idolatry.

They had failed to keep their part of the covenant, and could not expect God to keep his part.

They would not listen to the prophets (v. 14), but persisted in all iniquity, setting up idolatrous obelisks and Asherim (v. 10), and even sacrificing their children to the fire-god Molech (v. 17).

7. For so it was, that And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of E'gypt· from under the hand of Phā'raōh king of E'gypt, and had feared other gods,

8. And and [1] walked in the statutes of the heathen, nations, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9. And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that were were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, [2] from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10. [3] And they set them up images pillars and [4] groves Ash'er-im [5] in upon every high hill, and under every green tree:

11. And and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen did the nations whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

12. For and they served idols, [6] whereof the LORD had said unto them, [7] Ye shall not do this thing.

13. Yet the LORD testified against unto Israel, and against unto Jū'dah, by all the prophets, the hand of *and by* all every prophet, and [8] the seers, of every seer, saying, [9] Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by the hand of my servants the prophets.

14. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but [10] hardened their necks, neck, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe who believed not in the LORD their God.

[1] Lev. 18: 3; Deut. 18: 9; 2 Kings 16: 3.
[2] 2 Kings 18: 8.
[3] 1 Kings 14: 23; Isa. 57: 5.
[4] Ex. 34: 13; Mic. 5: 14.
[5] Deut. 12: 2; 2 Kings 16: 4.
[6] Ex. 20: 3, 4.
[7] Deut. 4: 19.
[8] 1 Sam. 9: 9.
[9] Jer. 18: 11.
[10] Deut. 31: 27.

THE ONLY POSSIBLE CONCLUSION:

Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

PHRASES EXPLAINED. 8. **Which they made.** These were statutes referring to calf-worship and other forms of idolatry. 9. **From the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.** "The tower of the watchmen" refers to the watch-towers erected in the fields for the protection of the flocks and shepherds in case of attack from robbers. 10. **Images** (R.V., "pillars"). Stone obelisks. **Groves** (R.V., "Asherim"). Carved wooden poles representing a heathen goddess. 14. **Hardened their necks.** "A stiff neck" was a symbol of obstinacy and self-will. 15. **They followed vanity, and became vain.** A play on words, for vanity, *i.e.*, nothingness, is a common Hebrew term for idols. *Vain* here means "empty of reason." 16. **The host of heaven.** This refers to the worship of the sun, moon, planets, and stars. 17. **Divination and enchantments.** The finding of omens of the future by means of the manipulations of rods, watching the flight of arrows, inspecting the entrails of sacrificial victims, etc.

IF ISRAEL HAD BEEN FAITHFUL. ***Would not Syria or Assyria or Babylonia have conquered Israel in time, even if the nation had obeyed God?*** There is no reason for thinking so. "In the days of David, of Uzziah, of Jeroboam II., Judah and Israel had shown what they could achieve. Had they been strong in faithfulness to Jehovah, and in the righteousness which that faith required, they would have shown an invincible strength amid the moral enervation of the surrounding people. They might have held their own by welding into one strong kingdom the whole of Palestine. They might have consolidated the sway which they at various times attained southwards, as far as the Red Sea port of Elath; northwards over Aram and Damascus, as far as the Hamath on the Orontes; eastwards to Thapsacus on the Euphrates; westward to the Isles of the Gentiles. Such a monarchy, held together by warrior statesmen, strong and righteous, and above all secure in the blessing of God, would have been a thoroughly adequate counterpoise, not only to

dilatory and distracted Egypt, which had long ceased to be aggressive, but even to brutal Assyria, which prevailed in no small measure because of the isolation and mutual dissension of these southern principalities." — *Farrar.*

OUR SAMARIAS AND HOW TO PRESERVE THEM.

Our Samarias are our souls. Every life repeats some part of Bunyan's great allegory of "The Holy War," the siege of the city of Mansoul by Diabolus. If we would not listen to Diabolus, if we would not make the little beginnings of sin, our Samarias would never fall.

ILLUSTRATION. "A tamer of wild beasts in London had a boa-constrictor, cared for by him from the time when it was little till it had grown to an enormous size. At the close of his exhibition the animal glided forward on the stage, and, at a word of command, rose upon him fold after fold till at length the man was hidden from sight and the horrible head of the monster waved aloft in the air. The audience began to cheer wildly, when suddenly they were still with horror. A scream of agony had come from the center of that serpent mass, and then, as all listened appalled, they heard the bones of the tamer crack, one after another, and all was still. The serpent had become the master. He had been toyed with once too often. That is what sin does for its victim." — *Addison P. Foster, D.D.* in *Monday Club Sermons.*

God will do as much for every least child as he did for the nation of Israel. He will send teachers and friends and helpers of all kinds, to lead him into the right way from which he has strayed. And "the more sin abounds, the more does God multiply means to draw back to himself. The darker the background of sin, the brighter the beams of his light show against it. It is on the storm-cloud that the sun paints the rainbow." — *Maclaren.* All we need, in order to preserve our Samarias against every foe, is to admit gladly and sincerely the Lord of Hosts, and make him the supreme ruler of our life-citadel.

LESSON XIII. — June 25.

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*** —MIC. 6: 8.

Different forms of review are suited to classes of different ages and different degrees of development, so that a variety of methods is suggested below. Some of these plans may need to be united with others to fill out the session, and any other changes and adaptations of them may be made that seem best to the teacher.

I. A SIX-BOOKS REVIEW.

The quarter's lessons have taken up six books of the Old Testament. There have been five lessons in Second Kings, two in Second Chronicles, two in Isaiah, and one each in Jonah, Micah, and Hosea. Select six members of the class and have each write a three-minute essay on one of these books, telling about the general course of the lessons or lesson from that book, and the teachings brought out therein. Let the class listen carefully to each essay, and at the close dictate a set of questions, which you have written beforehand, on the quarter's lessons as a whole, having the class write answers to the questions as they are read.

II. THE HIDDEN-QUESTIONS REVIEW.

The teacher will write on slips of cardboard or heavy manila paper a series of questions on the lessons of the quarter, about five questions on each lesson. These questions will cover the principal facts of the lessons, and will be so framed that the answers can be very brief, yet adequate. Lay the slips of paper, face down, on the class table or on a large book held in the lap, mix them up, and have the class draw them one at a time, in turn. The scholar that draws a question will read it aloud, and then answer it if he can, retaining the slip. If he does not answer correctly, or at all, the next on his left will try to answer it, and so on around the class. The scholar that answers it will hold the slip, and the scholar that holds the largest number at the end of the recitation is declared the victor in the little contest. Announce this plan a week in advance, that the class may study for it.

III. A PICTURE REVIEW.

Take a series of lesson pictures, such as the beautiful one published by the publisher of this volume, the W. A. Wilde Company, 120 Boylston Street, Boston. Obliterate the titles of the pictures, and fasten a bit of ribbon to each. Place the pictures in a box open at the end, and let the ribbons extend outside. The scholars will draw these pictures out one after the other, each scholar telling the class about the lesson to which his picture belongs, holding up the picture as he does so. After the pictures have been used once, if there is time they may be returned to the box and the exercise may be repeated. This form of review is especially adapted to the primary department.

IV. A QUESTION TOURNAMENT.

The class will be divided, at least a week in advance, into two sides, each side with a leader. The sides will meet by themselves and each prepare a series of questions on all the lessons of the quarter. The teacher will meet with each side and make sure that the questions are fair ones, and clearly expressed. On review day the two sides will sit facing each other. One side, through its leader, will propose a question to the other side, which will answer if it can, speaking always through its leader, but always after consultation with the rest of the side. Then the second side will propose a question to the first side, and so on, alternating. If the answer is wrong, the side that proposed the question scores a point; if partly wrong, half a point. The side that is defeated may be required to give a social, at the teacher's home, to the other side.

V. AN OUTSTANDING-TOPICS REVIEW.

This review, which is especially suited to adult classes, consists of a series of essays or talks on the principal topics of the various lessons. As far as possible, the speakers will choose their topics or lessons, but the teacher will have a list ready for suggestion. The following list will be an aid:

LESSON I. — The Healing Side of Religion.
LESSON II. — Our Unseen Defenders.
LESSON III. — Starting the Young in Their Lives.
LESSON IV. — Our Care for God's House.
LESSON V. — The Universality of Christianity.
LESSON VI. — The Perils of Pride.
LESSON VII. — Our Work for Our Country.
LESSON VIII. — Temperance Work Needed To-day.
LESSON IX. — The Madness of Militarism.
LESSON X. — God's Forgiveness, and How to Obtain It.
LESSON XI. — Reform Methods That Succeed.
LESSON XII. — The Final Results of Sin.

VI. AN OUTLINE REVIEW.

The teacher will take a large sheet of heavy manila paper, and with a broad-pointed shading-pen and very black ink, in large letters, he will copy as much of the following outline of the quarter's lessons as he can get on the sheet; then he will go on with other sheets till it is all copied. Fold each sheet back along the central line, taking pains to keep each half of the outline on its side of the sheet. Place the sheets before the class one after the other, and have the scholars copy them carefully. Before a sheet is copied the scholars will fold their sheets of paper backward down the center so as to divide them into two columns for exactness in copying. After a sheet has been copied, the teacher will fold the right-hand side backward so that it is out of sight, and see if the class can complete each line of the lefthand side from memory. Then go on to the next sheet, but return to the preceding sheets before each new one is copied. In this way much may be fixed in mind during the hour.

LESSON I.

A Syrian general named	Naaman,
Under the king,	Benhadad II.,
Was afflicted with	Leprosy.
He was told of	Elisha
By	A captive Hebrew girl.
He set out from	Damascus
And went to	Jehoram, king of Israel,
Finding him in	Samaria.
Elisha bade Naaman	Wash seven times in the Jordan.
Cured and grateful, he offered	Rich gifts.
Elisha refused, because	God's blessings are free.
Gifts accepted by	Elisha's servant, Gehazi,
Who was punished by	Leprosy.

LESSON II.

Troops of the king of Syria,	Benhadad II.,
Making forays upon	Israel,
Are often discovered by	Elisha.
To capture him, they surround	Dothan,
And are seen by	Elisha's servant.
Elisha calms him by	Vision of protecting angels.
He prays God to	Close the Syrians' eyes,
And thus leads them to	Samaria,
Where they are	Treated kindly and dismissed.

LESSON III.

Elisha labored chiefly under	King Jehoram,
Who was killed and succeeded by	Jehu.
Jehoram's sister,	Athaliah,
Married	Jehoram of Judah,
Son of	King Jehoshaphat.
This Jehoram's successor,	Ahaziah,
Visiting his uncle,	Jehoram of Israel,
Was killed when Jehoram was	Slain by Jehu.
Ahaziah's children were killed by	Their grandmother, Athaliah,
All but	The year-old Joash,
Who was preserved by	His aunt Jehosheba,
Wife of	The high priest Jehoiada,
Athaliah reigned for	Six years,
And then was	Executed by Jehoiada,
Who crowned	Joash,
And destroyed	Athaliah's Baal temple.

LESSON IV.

Joash, grown up, determined	To repair the Temple.
He ordered money raised by	The priests and Levites.
This failing, he obtained	Direct gifts in a chest.
The repaired Temple was despoiled to	Buy off Hazael, king of Syria,
After whose departure	Joash was assassinated.

LESSON V.

After Jehu the next strong king of Israel was	Jeroboam II.,
In whose reign the prophet	Jonah,
Bidden to	Preach to Nineveh,
Fled toward	Tarshish in Spain.
Preserved by the miracle of	The great fish,
He proclaimed in Nineveh	Its destruction within forty days.
Jonah's chagrin at	Nineveh's repentance
Was rebuked by	The destruction of his gourd.

LESSON VI.

Joash was succeeded by	His son Amaziah,
And he by	His son Uzziah,
Who enlarged his realm by	Conquering surrounding tribes,
Strengthened it by	Forts and a powerful army,
And enriched it by	Agriculture.
But his pride led him to	Enter the Holy Place,
And he was punished with	Leprosy.

LESSON VII.

The greatest Hebrew prophet,	Isaiah,
Began to prophesy in the year	King Uzziah died.
He was led to prophesy by	A vision of God in the Temple.
His lips purified by	A hot stone from the altar,
He was bidden proclaim	His nation's peril, and that some would be saved.

LESSON VIII.

Isaiah compared Judah to	A fruitless vineyard,
Which God would punish by	Laying it waste.
He named two chief sins,	Greed and intemperance.

LESSON IX.

A young prophet of this time,	Micah,
Lived in	Moresheth-gath, near Jerusalem.
He had a vision of	Universal peace,
When the nations should be ruled by	Jehovah, in the Temple.

LESSON X.

A contemporary prophet of Israel,	Hosea,
Took for his key-note	God's forgiveness,
Illustrated by	Hosea's own forgiveness
Of his	Sinning and repentant wife.

LESSON XI.

Uzziah of Judah was succeeded by	Jotham, a pious king;
And he by his son	Ahaz, an idolatrous king;
And he by	His son, Hezekiah,
Who at once	Cleansed the Temple,
And then	Reestablished the sacrifices,
And then summoned	All Hebrews, north and south,
And held	A great Passover feast.

LESSON XII.

During his reign the last king of Israel,	Hoshea,
Failing to pay tribute to	Shalmaneser IV. of Assyria,
Trusting in vain to	Help from Egypt,
Was besieged in	Samaria,
Which fell after	A siege of three years,
And many people were carried to	Mesopotamia and Media.
Thus fell	The Northern Kingdom,
After an existence of	Two and one-half centuries,
Because it	Disobeyed God's laws.

From an Assyrian Tablet.

Assyrian Chariot with Archer.

THIRD QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE LATER HISTORY OF JUDAH AND THE PROPHETS ISAIAH, JEREMIAH AND DANIEL.

JULY 2 — SEPTEMBER 24, 1911.

LESSON I. — July 2.

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY CONCERNING SENNACHERIB.

Isaiah 37 : 14–38.

PRINT vs. 21–36. COMMIT vs. 33–35. READ Isaiah 36 and 37; 2 Kings 18 and 19; 2 Chronicles 32.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*** — PSA. 46: 1.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Begin the lesson by telling the story of the great library of stone books found in the ruins of Nineveh. It is not difficult to get copies of some of the smaller clay tablets from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. The site Nineveh was unknown for more than 2,200 years; and those who passed over its ruins, like Xenophon and his ten thousand in B.C. 401, knew not what they were (*Anabasis* III., IV., 7). Napoleon encamped near its site and was not aware of it. It was not "till 1842 that the relics of her former splendor began to be revealed to the world."

Then the great library written on 30,000 clay tablets, and cylinders and slabs hardened into stone, began to be known. One of these books is a six sided cylinder 14 inches high on which Sennacherib wrote the account of his invasion of Palestine, names Hezekiah, and tells how many cities he captured, and how much booty he carried away.

It is the story of this great campaign, told not only in the Book of the Bible, but on a Book of Stone which confirms the Bible, that we are to study to-day.

VALLEY OF HINNOM — JERUSALEM.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psa. 46: 1–3, or the whole Psalm.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Adrăm'mĕlĕch (lek); Ash'kĕlŏn; Assy'rĭă; Ek'rŏn; Elī'ăkim; E'săr-hăd'dŏn; Hĕzĕkī'ăh; Isā'ĭăh (s-z); Jō'ăh; Lā'chĭsh (ch-k); Nĭn'ĕvĕh; Nĭs'rŏch; Pĕlū'sĭŭm; Răb'săris; Răb'shăkĕh; Săr'gŏn; Sĕnnăch'ĕrĭb; Shărē'zer; Shĕb'nă; Tär'tăn; Tĭr'hăkăh.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Probably B.C. 701–697, toward the close of Hezekiah's reign.

Place. — Jerusalem and vicinity. The destruction of the army was probably southwest of Judah toward Egypt. But the place is unknown.

Persons. — Hezekiah, king of Judah, 23d year.
Isaiah the prophet of Jehovah, 40th year.
Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and his chief officer Rabshakeh.
Tirhakah, governor or general of Egypt.

Parallel Accounts. — 2 Kings 18: 13—19: 37.
2 Chron. 32: 1–23.

ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Review of Hezekiah's reforms (2d quarter, Lesson XI.).
The Assyrian Empire, and the Northern Kingdom.
Sennacherib's account in the clay cylinder.
The speech of Rabshakeh.
The greatness of the threatened danger.
Hezekiah's Prayer.
Isaiah's part in the relief.
The destruction of Sennacherib's army.

READING IN CHARACTER.

Some parts of this story are remarkably dramatic, and great interest will be added to the lesson, by dividing up among several persons the whole story, one being the narrator, to fill in the story between the speeches. Something from Sennacherib could be read from his cylinder as given in the *Notes*, and all repeat in concert Byron's poem.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, and on Isaiah, especially George Adam Smith on Isaiah and Farrar on 2 Kings, both in the *Expositor's Bible* Series. *The Book of Isaiah*, by G. H. Box, M.A. (1909). Professor Roger's *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, vol. 2, chap. 8, gives a clear brief summary. Professor Price's *The Monuments and the Old Testament*. Professor Driver's *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible*, pp. 19, 20, 45.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Angel sent to deliver Israel, by Doré. *Destruction of Sennacherib's Army*, by Doré* and by West. *Isaiah*, by Sargent.*

* Wilde's Pictures.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Byron's fine poem, "The Destruction of Sennacherib." Dante's *Purgatorio*, xii., 48, 49. Longfellow's *Poems*, "The Beleaguered City," Macaulay's "The Armada." Herodotus, 2: chap. 141, has a story of the destruction of Sennacherib's army.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: A Great Trouble and a Great Deliverance.

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE HISTORICAL SITUATION.

II. THE FIRST SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.
The siege. The defence. The tribute.

III. THE SECOND SIEGE.
The demand. The argument.
The prayermeeting. The promise.

IV. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

A Terrible Trouble; and a Mighty Deliverance.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EVENT which forms the subject of the lesson to-day is shown by the fact that its history is given in three books of the Bible, and probably referred to in another, occupying seven or eight chapters, besides the clay cylinder on which Sennacherib made his own record: Isaiah 22, 33, 36, 37, and as Prof. G. A. Smith and many modern critics think, chapter 1 in large part; 2 Kings 18, 19; 2 Chronicles 32; and probably Psalm 46.

Why? Because it was a great crisis in Israel's history like the Exodus, and Return from

Captivity, a signal landmark, to teach and warn and encourage and comfort Israel in other great crises, and the nations and individuals of all times.

It is a great thing for any nation and for any individual to have such a marvelous experience of God's salvation. "Nations are benefited for ages by being thrown once into divine white heat in this manner."

I. **The Historical Situation.** — 1. Hezekiah, as we saw in our last quarter's lessons, although the son of a bad father (but a good mother), began his reign with a thorough and wide-spread reformation and revival of the true religion, even while the Assyrians were invading the Northern Kingdom. He cleansed and repaired the temple, restored the temple services, and provided for the support of the Levites and for popular religious instruction from the books of the law, thus bringing about a great uprising against idolatry.

Sargon II., 722-705 B.C., Captor of Samaria.

THE RESULT was most happy. "Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor." His kingdom was tranquil, strong, and wealthy. But one constant danger threatened Judah,— the growing power of Assyria, whose overlordship Ahaz had acknowledged, against the urgent protests of Isaiah.

2. Then in the sixth year of his reign Samaria fell before the Assyrian power, and the Northern Kingdom as a kingdom became extinct.

3. Judah seems to have continued the alliance with Assyria, which had become the most powerful nation in the world to whom Judah and the surrounding nations were paying tribute.

4. In the fourteenth year of his reign Hezekiah had a severe sickness from which, in answer to his prayer, God restored him to health, adding fifteen years to his life (Isaiah 39; 2 Kings 20). Although recorded after the events of this lesson, the chronology leads most students to place the sickness earlier.

5. Three or four years before our present lesson, B.C. 705, Sennacherib, the son of Sargon, became king of Assyria. During these years he was kept busy in putting down rebellions in Babylon, and Chaldea, and the Median Mountains. (See Taylor Cylinder and other records by Sennacherib.)

6. During this time Hezekiah joined with the Philistines and the Phœnician states, with the promise of help from Egypt, in a general rebellion against the Assyrian power, refusing any longer to pay the accustomed tribute. The opportunity seemed favorable. Isaiah strongly opposed the movement, but "the whole land was aflame with patriotism, and woe betide the man, even a king, who dared oppose it. Hezekiah had been victorious over the Philistines. He had built an aqueduct by which an abundant supply of flowing water was brought within the city walls." — *Professor Rogers.* "He carried out extensive schemes for fortifying the capital." Thus Jerusalem could stand a siege better than ever before. Its position is almost an impregnable Gibraltar, so long as its inhabitants are united.

7. Then follows the great invasion of Palestine, B.C. 701, by Sennacherib, with a double siege of Jerusalem.

II. **The First Siege of Jerusalem.** — 2 Kings 17: 13–16; 2 Chron. 32: 1–8; Isaiah 1 and 22. Having subdued the revolt in the East, Sennacherib with an immense army turned fiercely to the rebellious provinces of the west. His path was plain — to begin with the Phœnician cities. He subdued Sidon, and marching down the coast, city after city fell before the invader, Joppa, Ekron, Ashkelon, in Philistia. Before Ekron was reduced the Egyptian army arrived in Philistia. Sennacherib went out to meet them, defeated them, and returned to Ekron to complete its capture. From Ekron he sent detachments of his army to take Jerusalem, his strongest enemy. He himself gives this account of this attack. "Hezekiah, king of Judah, who had not bowed down at my feet, 46 of his strong cities, his castles, and the smaller towns in their neighborhood I besieged, I captured. Also 200,150

persons small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, large cattle, small cattle, without number, I brought forth from the midst of them, and allotted as spoil. As for himself, like a caged bird in Jerusalem his capital city, I shut him up. Siege-towers against him I constructed, **for he had given command to renew the bulwarks of the great gate of his city."**

HEZEKIAH'S DEFENCE. The last sentence above confirms the story in 2 Chron. 32: 1–8, that Hezekiah acted like a brave king and general, making the best defence he could of the city. He stopped up the fountains outside the city, which would have enabled the enemy to continue the siege. He rebuilt walls, made new ones, organized the people under "captains of war." Then, having done all he could and shown his faith by his works he inspired them with courage and faith with such words as these:

Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him.

With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. —2 Chron. 32: 7, 8.

HEZEKIAH PURCHASES RELIEF AT HIGH COST. 2 Kings 18: 14–16. But as the Assyrian army approached, "terrible as an army with banners," a resistless torrent, an overwhelming scourge, the people lost faith in their defences, and in Hezekiah's assurances.

"Signs of the Assyrian advance were given in the sky, and night after night the watchers on Mount Zion, seeing the glare in the west, must have speculated which of the cities of Judah was being burned. Clouds of smoke across the heavens, from prairie and forest fires, told how war, even if it passed, would leave a trail of famine; and men thought with breaking hearts of the villages and fields, heritage of the tribes of old, that were now bare to the foot and the fire of the foreigner. Then came touch of the enemy, the appearance of armed bands, vistas down Jerusalem's favorite valleys of chariots, squadrons of horsemen emerging upon the plateaus to north and west of the city, heavy siege-towers and swarms of men innumerable." — *George Adam Smith.*

The Taylor Cylinder as Mounted in the British Museum.

Inscribed on it is an account by Sennacherib, of his victory over Hezekiah. Found at Nineveh in its great stone library.

Hezekiah saw that safety demanded further works before the promise could be fulfilled. Hence he sent messengers to Sennacherib's headquarters at Lachish, nearer Egypt than Ekron, begged his forgiveness, and asked on what terms he would remove his army. The reply was 300 talents of silver ($291,000, at $970 per talent) and 30 talents of gold (at $14,542 per talent = $436,260). Sennacherib says 800 talents of silver. But there would be little difference if he refers to the light talent of $970, and the author of Kings refers to the heavy talent of $1,940. Besides this, money values differ in different countries, even as they do now. In order to pay this tribute Hezekiah had to strip the gold from the doors and pillars of the Temple, and use all the silver in its treasury.

"But," as Prof. Geo. Adam Smith affirms, "it purchased the relief of the city; and no price was too high to pay for that at such a moment. . . . The Temple is greater than the gold of the Temple."

This treasure was sent to Lachish, and the Assyrians withdrew. So Jerusalem remained inviolate.

III. The Second Siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib.

Let us from all these accounts gain a clear view of the situation from all points of view. { 2 Kings 18: 17—19: 36; 2 Chron. 32: 9–23; Isaiah 33, 36, 37.

21. Then I-sā'iah the son of A'moz sent unto Hĕz-e-kī'ah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, *the* God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sĕn-năch'e-rĭb king of As-syr'ĭ-a:

22. *This is* the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin *the* daughter of Zī'ŏn hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel.

24. [a] By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, *By* the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the *sides* innermost parts of Lĕb'a-non; and I will cut down [b] the tall cedars thereof, *and* the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, *and* his farthest height, the forest of his Car'mel, fruitful field.

25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet *have* I *dried* dry up all the rivers of the [c] besieged places. Egypt.

a Heb., *By the hand of thy servants.*
b Heb., *the tallness of the cedars thereof*, and *the choice of the fir trees thereof.*
c Or, *defence.*

FIRST. SENNACHERIB SENDS AN ARMY DEMANDING THE SURRENDER OF JERUSALEM. "When Sennacherib got the tribute, he repented of the treaty he had made with Hezekiah. So in spite of the tribute, he sent a force back to Jerusalem to demand her surrender. He may have felt that it was a mistake to leave in his rear so powerful a fortress, while he had still to complete the overthrow of the Egyptians."

SECOND. The Assyrians, coming near to the walls of the city and speaking through Rabshakeh, the chief officer of Sennacherib, made the contest one between Jehovah and the Assyrian idols, between the True Religion, the one means of redeeming the world, and Heathenism which was debasing mankind. Rabshakeh shouted to the people on the walls of Jerusalem:

"Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

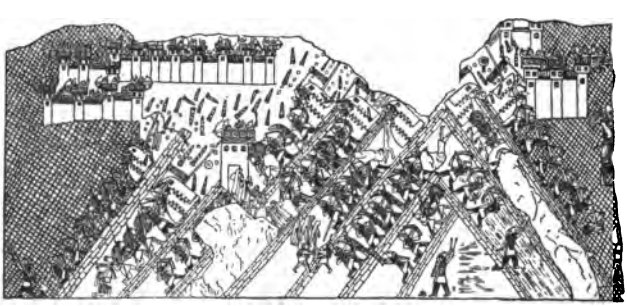
"Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

"Where *are* the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

"Who *are* they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?"

The people answered nothing. Rabshakeh returned to Sennacherib, who had moved his army from Lachish southward to Libnah to meet the army of the Egyptians. From this place another message was sent of the same import.

THIRD. Then Hezekiah, and Isaiah (2 Chron. 32: 20), and apparently the scribes and elders (Isa. 37: 2), clothed in sackcloth, went into the Temple, and prayed from their inmost souls.



Storming of Lachish by Sennacherib's Army.

NOTE how afflictions lead to prayer. Hezekiah saw before him captivity, suffering, probably death, the loss of his kingdom, the extinction of his line, the exile of his people. But above all he saw the fall of true religion,

26. Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; *and* of ancient times, that I have / how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient formed it? / times? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced / fenced cities *into* / into ruinous heaps.

27. Therefore their inhabitants *were* / were [a] of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were *as* / as the grass of the field, and *as* / as the green herb, *as* / as the grass on the house tops, / housetops, and *as corn* blasted / as a field *of corn* before it be grown up.

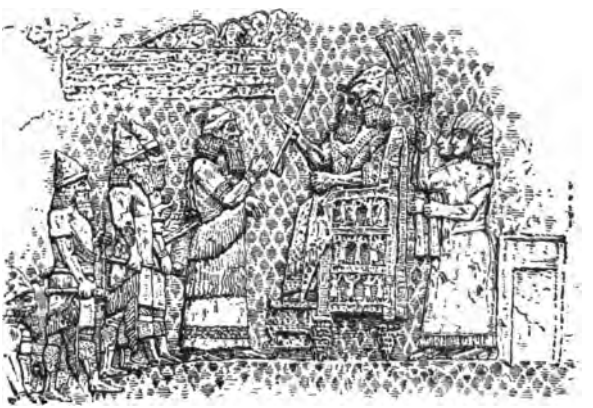
28. But I know thy abode, / sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage / raging against me.

29. Because of thy rage / raging against me, and thy tumult, / for that thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore [1] will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

30. And this *shall be* a / shall be the sign unto thee: Ye / ye shall eat *this* / this year such as / that which groweth of itself; and in / in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

[1] Isa. 30 : 28; Ezek. 38 : 4. *a* Heb., *short of hand.*

the dishonor of God's name, a religious and moral loss to the world. We should pray for temporal blessings, for whatever we need; but at the same time we should never let the desire for earthly things overshadow the larger and more important spiritual interests; but rather, as in Hezekiah's case, the pressure of personal need should make more intense the desire for God's cause and kingdom.



One of a series of sculptured slabs showing Sennacherib sitting on his throne before the city of Lachish receiving tribute.

THE BELEAGUERED CITY. One of Longfellow's poems is founded on an old legend that the city of Prague was once besieged by an army of evil spirits; but when the cathedral bell sounded the hour of prayer, the prayers of the saints were mightier than the evil spirits, and the besieging army

"... fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

"I have read, in the marvelous heart of man,
That strange and mystic scroll,
That an army of phantoms, vast and wan,
Beleaguer the human soul.

"And when the solemn and deep church-bell
Entreats the soul to pray,
The midnight phantoms feel the spell,
The shadows sweep away.

"Down the broad Vale of Tears afar
The spectral camp is fled;
Faith shineth as a morning star;
Our ghastly fears are dead."

FOURTH. Then came a message from God through Isaiah (vs. 21–29). **Whereas thou hast prayed,** showing his heart prepared by faith, so that relief from trouble would work a blessing. For the same reason that Jesus required faith in those he healed.

22. This is the word. Hitherto Isaiah's message had been one of warning to Judah, in order to make them so obedient to God that the relief could come to them as a blessing. Now his message concerns the Assyrians, but also shows Judah why God comes to their help.

31. And [a] the remnant that is escaped of the house of Jū'dah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and [they that escape out of / out of mount Zi'on they] [mount Zi'on: / that shall escape:] the [1] zeal of the LORD of hosts shall [do / perform] this.

33. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of As-syr'ĭ-a, He shall not come [into / unto] this city, nor shoot an arrow there, [nor / neither shall he] come before it with [shields / shield:] nor cast a [bank / mount] against it.

34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and [he] shall not come [into / unto] this city, saith the LORD.

35. For I will [2] defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36. [Then / And] the [3] angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the As-syr'ĭ-ans a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when [they / men] arose early in the morning, behold they [were / were] all dead corpses.

[1] 2 Kings 19: 31; Isa. 9: 7.
[2] 2 Kings 20: 6; Isa. 38: 6.
[3] 2 Kings 19: 35.
a Heb., *the escaping of the house of Judah that remain.*

24. Cut down the tall cedars. He represents himself as conquering all obstacles.

28. But I, Jehovah, know all your doings.

29. Will I put my hook in thy nose to lead thee where I will, as did the Assyrians who are represented on their sculptures leading captives and oxen by hooks in the nose.

FIFTH. THE PROMISE (vs. 30–35). **30. And this shall be a sign unto thee.** God is speaking now to Judah. **This year . . . the second,** etc. Since they have not been able to sow this year of the invasion, they must depend for the next year on what grows of itself, but **the third year** they can sow and reap. It would take some time for the Assyrians to get out of the country.

31. Take root downward, etc. The nation shall be again like "a tree planted by the rivers of water."

32. The zeal, the earnest energy of one who gives his whole soul to carrying out his promise.

33. The king of Assyria . . . shall not come into this city. That was God's promise, however unlikely its fulfilment seemed to them. They could not imagine God's way of doing it.

35. I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, not because you deserve it, but because it is necessary for carrying out God's plan of redemption for the world.

IV. **The Wonderful Deliverance.** — V. 36. **The angel of the LORD.** The person or the forces which God would employ for this deliverance. Thus in Psa. 104: 4, the winds are said to be God's angels or messengers. Angel = one sent forth. **Smote . . . of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand.**

> "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
> And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
> . . . . . .
> Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green
> That host with their banners at sunset were seen.
> Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
> That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.
> For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed.
> . . . . . .
> And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
> The lances uplifted, the trumpet unblown,
> And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
> Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."
>
> — *Byron.*

Just where this occurred we do not know. But Sennacherib was marching toward Egypt. The deliverance was a deliverance of Egypt as well as of Judah. The scene may well have been near Egypt. Whether it was by a storm, or pestilence, no one knows.

It is remarkable that the histories of both his chief rivals in this campaign, Judah and Egypt, should contain independent reminiscences of so sudden and miraculous a disaster to his host.

THE EGYPTIAN STORY. "From Egyptian sources there has come down through Herodotus (ii. 14), a story that a king of Egypt, being deserted by the military caste, when Sennacherib King of the Arabs and Assyrians invaded his country, entered his sanctuary and appealed with weeping to his god; that the god appeared and cheered him; that he raised an army of artisans and marched to meet Sennacherib in Pelusium; that by night a multitude of field-mice ate up the quivers, bow-strings and shield-straps of the Assyrians; and that, as these fled on the morrow, very many of them fell. A stone statue of the king, adds Herodotus, stood in the temple of Hephæstus, having a mouse in the hand. Now, since the mouse was a symbol of sudden destruction, and even of the plague, this story of Herodotus seems to be merely a picturesque form of a tradition that pestilence broke out in the Assyrian camp. The parallel with the Bible narrative is close. In both accounts it is a prayer of the king that prevails. In both the Deity sends His agent — in the grotesque Egyptian an army of mice, in the sublime Jewish His angel. In both the effects are sudden, happening in a single night. From the Assyrian side we have this corroboration: that Sennacherib did abruptly return to Nineveh without taking Jerusalem or meeting with Tirhakah, and that, though he reigned for twenty years more, he never again made a Syrian campaign." — *Expositor's Bible.*

CONFIRMATORY ACCOUNTS. There is nothing in the Bible record that contradicts the belief that the disaster occurred in the neighborhood of Pelusium and the Serbonian bog in Northeastern Egypt. It was a place terrible for filth and miasma. A Persian army was decimated here in the middle of the fourth century before Christ. Napoleon's army barely escaped destruction here.

"The amount of the Assyrian loss is enormous, and implies of course a much higher figure for the army which was vast enough to suffer it; but here are some instances for comparison. In the early German invasions of Italy whole armies and camps were swept away by the pestilential climate. The losses of the First Crusade were over 300,000. The soldiers of the Third Crusade, upon the scene of Sennacherib's war, were reckoned at more than half a million, and their losses by disease alone at over 100,000. The Grand Army of Napoleon entered Russia 250,000, but came out, having suffered no decisive defeat, only 12,000; on the retreat from Moscow alone 90,000 perished."

But it was under God's control, and it was his salvation that saved Jerusalem.

READ PSALM 46.

LESSON II. — July 9.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF JEHOVAH.

Isaiah 52: 13—53: 12.

COMMIT 53: 4-6. READ 42: 1-9; 49: 1-18; 50: 4-11.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*** — ISA. 53: 6.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The problem of the teacher of this lesson is how to make it practical to children, and make it touch their daily lives. For it was written 2,500 years ago; it was fulfilled 1,900 years ago; it stands at the extreme height of heroic self-sacrifice.

But its spirit of service belongs to children, as well as to adults, and to the present day. Jesus was as really doing God's service when he brought water from the Virgin's Spring for his mother, or helped his father at the carpenter's bench, as when he gave his life a sacrifice on the cross.

We will try and get at the true spirit of this self-sacrifice, and apply it to modern times, but ever realizing that the lesson presents the highest, the most ideal, the most glorious example ever held up before the ages, to kindle the same spirit in our hearts and lives.

LEARN BY HEART.

1 Cor. 5: 14, 15; John 3: 16.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

The lesson is from the second part of the Book of Isaiah.

Whenever written it belongs to the time of the exile, just before the return.

It brought hope, inspiration, instruction, life, and light in the darkest period in the history of Israel.

THE PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Saviour, and How He Saves Us.

THE STATE OF THINGS TO WHICH THIS PROPHECY FIRST APPLIED. THE EXILE.

THE CENTRAL POSITION OF THIS LESSON, AND WHAT IT TEACHES.

STROPHE I. THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH (Isa. 52: 13–15).

STROPHE II. HOW HE APPEARED TO THE PEOPLE (vs. 1–3).

STROPHE III. HOW HE DID GOD'S SERVICE (vs. 4–6).

STROPHE IV. THE PROPHET'S VISION OF JESUS (vs. 7–9).

STROPHE V. THE VISION OF REDEMPTION (vs. 10–12).

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The second part of Isaiah.
The servant of the Lord.
How this applied to the nation.
How it was fulfilled in Christ.
Why was the death of Christ necessary for our salvation?
What is self-sacrifice?
In what ways can we be a servant of God?

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The most helpful commentary for the teacher of this lesson is Prof. Geo. Adam Smith's in the *Expositor's Bible* series.

Other excellent ones are Professor Skinner's in the *Cambridge Bible*, *The Book of Isaiah*, by G. H. Box, M.A., *Commentaries*, by Delitzsch, by Cheyne, by Orelli.

Professor Driver's *Isaiah and His Times*. The *Polychrome Bible*, *Isaiah*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

"Vision of Sir Launfal." "O golden day," by Dickinson. *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning the Church*, by Anna Louise Strong (Revell).

THE LESSON IN ART.

Isaiah, by Sargent,* in the Boston Public Library; Michelangelo (Sistine chapel); Bartolommeo (Uffizi, Florence); Raphael, Burne-Jones, and many others.

* In Wilde's Bible Pictures.

The Redeemer and the Means by which He Is Redeeming the World.

The State of Things to Which This Prophecy Applied. — God's peculiar people were in exile among heathen populations. Their homeland, Palestine, had been devastated. Jerusalem lay in ashes. The temple was a heap of ruins. The nation was like the stump of a mighty tree which had been cut down. The tree had been cut down because it refused to bear the good fruit for which God had planted it. But in captivity the people had been learning their lesson, and the time had come when it was possible for a new shoot to spring up from the barren stump, and a renewed nation to take up its appointed mission.

But in order to do this, the nation must be made to see clearly what they must be and do, and the deepest motives toward this end be inspired within them.

All this is a parable for the world and God's people to-day.

The Position of This Lesson in the Second Division of the Book of Isaiah. — It throws no little light on our lesson to realize its relation to the prophecy as a whole. According to all critics the whole lesson really belongs to the 53d chapter of Isaiah, the 52d ending at the 12th verse. The prophecy consists of 27 chapters, of which the 53d is the central one, making the whole prophecy to consist of three sections.

FIRST. THE FIRST THIRTEEN CHAPTERS ARE A TRUMPET CALL TO THE CAPTIVE ISRAELITES who have been "hanging their harps on the willows" unable to "sing the songs of Zion," to awake to faith in God, and obedience and loyalty to him, and to be prepared for their deliverance.

Their God is the true God (Isa. 40: 28).

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding.

God's promises of help (Isa. 41: 17, 18; 43: 2).

When the poor and needy seek water, and *there is* none, *and* their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, *I* the God of Israel will not forsake them.

I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Entreaty (Isa. 48: 18).

O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

Encouragement (Isa. 50: 10)

Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

It will be inspiring to read the whole thirteen chapters.

SECOND. CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE PRESENTS THE MEANS BY WHICH THE REDEMPTION CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED, the heroic service of his people, and the supreme self-sacrificing love of his Son.

THIRD. THE SUCCEEDING THIRTEEN CHAPTERS PRESENT THE RESULTS IN THE REDEEMED NATION, AND THE REDEEMED WORLD.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
And the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.
And the nations shall come to thy light,
And kings to the brightness of thy rising.

O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted,
Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours,
And lay thy foundations with sapphires.
And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD;
And great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace:
The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,
And all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree,
And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree:
And it shall be to the LORD for a name,
For an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

Thy sun shall no more go down;
Neither shall thy moon withdraw itself:
For the LORD shall be thine everlasting light,
And the days of thy mourning shall be ended.
Thy people also *shall be* all righteous:
They shall inherit the land for ever,
The branch of my planting, the work of my hands,
That I may be glorified.
A little one shall become a thousand,
And a small one a strong nation:
I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
And every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.
This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

STROPHE I. ISAIAH 52.

Narrator. 13. Behold, my servant shall deal wisely,
He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.
14. Like as many were astonied at thee,
(His visage was so marred more than any man,
And his form more than the sons of men,)
15. So shall he sprinkle many nations;
Kings shall shut their mouths at him:
For that which had not been told them shall they see;
And that which they had not heard shall they understand.

Strophe I. The Servant of Jehovah. — Isa. 52: 13–15. **Behold, my servant.** "The Hebrew word for *servant* means a person at the disposal of another — to carry out his will, do his work, represent his interests."

THE SERVICE OF GOD. "The service of God was a commission to witness and prophesy for God upon earth." Israel was "elected not to salvation, but to service," or rather as in the case of any individual, the nation was elected to salvation that it might be of service. It was necessary that the "servant" who was to carry out God's purpose of saving the world should be a nation, from the condition of the ancient world. "Of all possible combinations of men the nation was the only form which in the ancient world stood a chance of surviving in the struggle for existence."

"It was only through a people that God became visible and accredited to the world. At a time when it was impossible to spread a religion by means of literature, or by example of personal holiness, the achievements of a considerable nation, their progress and prestige, furnished a universally understood language through which God could publish to mankind his power and his will." In the feeling of the Orient "that which gave a god prestige," says Prof. A. B. Davidson, "was the strength and victorious career of his people."

The same is still largely true of Christian nations and Christian churches to-day, as God's witnesses to all heathen nations, and non-Christian individuals.

This fact explains God's dealings with Israel. He could prosper them only when they lived his principles and truths. Otherwise the more he prospered them the less they were able to do his service.

THE SERVANT OF GOD was therefore FIRST the nation of Israel (41: 8). But SECOND as a large part of Israel were not doing God's service or living his religion, "the servant" was the remnant, the few who represented the true spirit of the nation, its ideal, its genius, as Milton uses "England" to stand for "the true genius of England realized in her enlightened and aspiring sons," as distinguished from those "who are indeed Englishmen after the flesh, but form no part of the nation's better self." Or as to Mazzini the real "Italy" was but a handful of born Italians, who lived the real Italian spirit, and later inspired the nation with it. We speak of the "American" spirit in the same way.

But, THIRD, when we reach the 53d of Isaiah the servant of Jehovah is unmistakably a Person. "*None but prejudiced Jews have ever denied that this great prophecy was fulfilled in One Person, Jesus of Nazareth, and achieved in all its details by Him alone.*" — *Geo. Adam Smith.*

My servant shall deal prudently, wisely. His plan of salvation, of redeeming this world into the kingdom of heaven is the perfection of divine wisdom. The more I think on the nature and work and method of Jesus Christ, the more it is tested by modern science and knowledge of man, the more I see of its working in the world, the more am I overwhelmed in admiration at Jesus Christ as the wisdom and power of God.

THE TWO CONTRASTED ASPECTS IN HIS NATURE. Contrasted, but not contradictory any more than our souls and our bodies united are a contradiction. As bodies we die, we are material; as souls we are spirit and immortal. But the union in one person is a fact.

FIRST. THE SERVANT SHALL BE EXALTED, really great, as the Son of God; **and extolled,** acknowledged as great, "glory to God in the highest." **And be very high,** the greatest imaginable being; the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

SECOND. **As many were astonied at thee,** because he came so differently from all their expectations, that they could scarcely conceive how the humble Jesus could be such as had just been described; for HIS VISAGE WAS SO MARRED, etc. These expressions de-

STROPHE II. ISAIAH 53.

The People.

1. Who hath believed our report?
   And to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?
2. For he grew up before him as a tender plant,
   And as a root out of a dry ground:
   He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him,
   There is no beauty that we should desire him.
3. He was despised, and rejected of men;
   A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
   And as one from whom men hide their face
   He was despised, and we esteemed him not.

---

scribe, not his face and body, but his whole position among men, as he appeared to them; far humbler, poorer, burdened, farther removed from men's ideal of a king and prophet than most of **the sons of men.**

THEN FOLLOWED THE RESULTS of his service (vs. 10–12), and described more fully in the thirteen chapters which follow the 53d chapter (as we have seen above).

So shall he sprinkle, better as most scholars translate, "so shall he *startle*" **many nations**, cause them to spring up suddenly in admiration. **Kings shall shut their mouths.** Keep silence before him in respectful silence, before the greatest King of all.

For that which had not been told them, the greatness and glory of his kingdom, beyond human conception expressed in words, **shall they see**, actually wrought out before their eyes. As to the Queen of Sheba the half had not been told.

The general statement in vs. 13–15 is now followed by the same great Truth repeated in detail, interpreted, and emphasized.

Strophe II. He Appeared to the People. — Vs. 1–3 (corresponding to v. 13 above). **Who hath believed our report**, the report to us, the truth about the Servant that had been revealed through God's promises and prophets.

The arm of the LORD. His power to defend and save. Few understood Christ when he first came.

2. **As a tender plant**, insignificant, unable to endure the storms, and grow up into a tree. **Root out of a dry ground**, with nothing to nourish it into the promised tree. The great world could not, in the Son of God, coming as a poor, ordinary man, without rank, or wealth, or army, or splendor, see the Promised Messiah. **No beauty that we should desire him.** There was nothing in his appearance that would lead those who were looking for a great conqueror who would sweep away the Roman government and its fetters, — to put any dependence upon him.

3. Hence he was **despised and rejected of men.** Instead of being the recipient of all the pleasures which royalty was supposed to have, he was **a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief**, and thus "he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and able to save us.

Strophe III. He Did God's Service for the World's Redemption by Bearing the Sorrows and Sins of Man. — Vs. 4–6. 4. **Surely he hath borne our griefs.** His sufferings were not because he himself had done wrong, but in order that he might save us from them. He bore them on his heart and sympathy. He bore them away by his healing power. He bore them as the martyr and the hero suffers that he may save the oppressed and the wronged and persecuted from their sufferings. He bore them away by transforming them into character. He bore them by giving his life for our sins, so that by removing sin he removed most of the griefs of man. Christianity has been the chief power in removing the griefs and sorrows of mankind.

Yet we did esteem him stricken . . . of God, as if he were one deserving sorrow, instead of being the remover of sorrow.

5. **But he was wounded for our transgressions.** All that Christ did from his coming from heaven, through all his earthly career of working and teaching and suffering, to his death on the cross, was on account of our sins, in order to save us from them and their consequences.

The chastisement of our peace, the chastisement by which our peace could be obtained.

STROPHE III.

The People.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
5. But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed.
6. All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned every one to his own way;
And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

STROPHE IV.

The Prophet.

7. He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself
And opened not his mouth;
As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb;
Yea, he opened not his mouth.
8. By oppression and judgement he was taken away;
And as for his generation,
Who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living?
For the transgression of my people was he stricken.
9. And they made his grave with the wicked,
And with the rich in his death;
Although he had done no violence,
Neither was any deceit in his mouth.

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6. And this help is needed because we all **like sheep have gone astray** from the Good Shepherd, and have wandered into dangers and deserts and are lost.

The LORD hath laid on him. Not forced it on him, but saw that this vicarious sacrifice was the only way by which men could be saved from their iniquities. Jesus took the burden of his own choice.

All this points directly to Jesus Christ, and was fulfilled in him.

CHRIST BEARING AND BEARING AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD. FIRST. Sin must be taken away by some means. It is ruining men and nations.

SECOND. Sin must be forgiven — its evil consequences removed, and the disposition to sin taken away.

THIRD. Free forgiveness, merely on condition of repentance, fails (1) in satisfying the sense of justice; (2) in showing the evil of sin; (3) in satisfying the conscience of the sinner himself; (4) in preventing sin in others. No ruler in a wicked world can make it a rule to forgive sin and remove its punishment on the mere condition of repentance, although it be sincere, without spreading and multiplying that sin. Wherever the penalty is thus relaxed the sins multiply.

FOURTH. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through faith in him and loyalty to him, is the one essential power for the saving of men from sin and ruin. Its principles are those by which every movement toward a perfect world can succeed.

Its central power is Love, love that proves its sincerity by what it is willing to do and suffer for others.

God's love is manifested in Jesus, not only by the Cross, but by all that Jesus was and did and suffered, culminating with the Cross.

From this Life and Death and Resurrection radiated all possible motives that touch the heart of man and move men to become saints, and the world to become the kingdom of heaven.

Strophe IV. The Prophet Foresees These Things Fulfilled in Jesus Christ. — Vs. 7–9. The picture in these verses is almost a photograph of what took place five hundred years later.

STROPHE V.

The Vision of Triumph.

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;
He hath put him to grief:
When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied:
By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many:
And he shall bear their iniquities.
12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great,
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
Because he poured out his soul unto death,
And was numbered with the transgressors:
Yet he bare the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

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7. **He was oppressed,** his sufferings were unjustly inflicted on him. Read the story of his trial. **He opened not his mouth** in protest. He submitted to the wrong.

8. **He was taken from prison,** etc. R.V., "By oppression and judgment," by a perversion of justice. **And who shall declare,** etc. R.V., "As for his generation who among them considered," etc. "His contemporaries did not understand that his death was for his people's transgression."

9. **And he made** (rather, with R.V., *They made*, or with Cheyne, "appointed") **his grave with the wicked** (plural), **and with the rich** (singular, a rich one) **in his death** (when he was dead). An enigma which only history could explain. Jesus was put to death with the wicked on the cross, and they thought to bury him in a criminal's grave. They appointed his grave with the wicked, but by a striking providence the same authority gave permission to a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, who provided him with an honorable burial in his own rock-hewn tomb (Matt. 27: 57–60). **Because** (R.V., *although*) **he had done no violence.** He did not deserve to be classed with the wicked.

Strophe V. A Vision and a Promise of the Results. — Vs. 10–12. 10. **Yet it pleased the LORD** because he saw the good to be gained. The blessings described in the last thirteen chapters of Isaiah, following this chapter.

He shall see his seed, his spiritual descendants, filled with his spirit and carrying out his plans.

He shall prolong his days. He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is the everlasting Leader and King. **The pleasure of the Lord,** what the Lord desires to be accomplished in the world.

11. **See of the travail of his soul,** described above, **and . . . be satisfied.** The results shall be more than enough "to pay him for his pain."

By his knowledge, of God, and his ways and principles.

Shall . . . justify, make righteous **many.** So in Dan. 12: 3, "that turn many unto righteousness."

12. **I will divide him a portion with the great.** Of all kings he is the most glorious. Of all kingdoms his is the largest, noblest, best beyond all compare. All because he took the way of suffering Love.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

1. This far off vision of Jesus, and of the redeemed world, is one of the strongest proofs of a revelation from God. Professor Ramsay declares that the Bible is unique among ancient religions in that "to the Hebrew prophets, and to them alone, the Better Age lay always in future."

"The best is yet to be,
The last of life for which the first was made."

2. We see in this lesson the one source of power for saving man, and transforming the world. The path of unselfishness is the path to power.

3. The business of all followers of Jesus is to be servants of Jehovah, to do as far as in them lies the same kind of service that Jesus did.

"For several years before his death, on December 24, 1899, Mr. Daniel S. Ford, the proprietor, editor and builder of the *Youth's Companion*, because of delicate health, managed his work and his mammoth business from a little room in his home on one of the beautiful parks of Boston. When loving hands cleared the plain but convenient desk, there was found in a conspicuous place, much worn with frequent handling, the following poem. If the poet had intended to describe Mr. Ford's daily works, words and deeds, he could not have done so in more appropriate language:

'The bread that bringeth strength I want to give;
The water pure that bids the thirsty live;
I want to help the fainting day by day;
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

'I want to give the oil of joy for tears,
The faith to conquer crowding doubts and fears,
Beauty for ashes may I give alway;
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

'I want to give good measure running o'er,
And into angry hearts I want to pour
The answer soft that turneth wrath away;
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

'I want to give to others hope and faith;
I want to do all that the Master saith;
I want to live aright from day to day;
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.'"

NOT TO BE MINISTERED TO.

"O Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From thy command,
Not to be served, but to serve.

"This too I pray
That from this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent
My good intent
Not to be pleased, but to please.

"And if I may
I'd have this day
Strength from above
To set my heart
In heavenly art
Not to be loved, but to love."

—*Maltbie D. Babcock, D.D.*

Teach this prayer:

"Dear Jesus, help me, I pray,
To do all the good I can,
In all the ways I can,
To all the people I can,
And just as long as I can.
And this I ask for Thy Name's sake.
Amen."

4. Keep your eyes on the promises and visions that follow this portrait of the Servant of Jehovah, some of which have been presented on page 207.

LESSON III. — July 16.

MANASSEH'S WICKEDNESS AND PENITENCE.

2 Chronicles 33: 1–20.

PRINT vs. 1-13. COMMIT vs. 12, 13. READ 2 Kings 21: 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Cease to do evil; learn to do well.* — ISA. 1: 16, 17.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The teacher of boys or girls may begin by asking what a lighthouse is for, or a foghorn, or bell buoy in the harbor.

Is it to tell the sailors where to go?

No, it is to tell them where *not* to go.

Why are stories of bad men told in the Bible, such as the one in to-day's lesson?

They are a warning. They are pictures of a character that repels us, that urges us not to enter any path that leads to that end.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The Times of Manasseh.
Manasseh, the story of.
What were the wrongs he did?
How would these injure the nation?
What punishment followed?
How did this lead him to repentance?
What did God's forgiving love do for him?

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Manasseh reigned 55 years, from B.C. 694–640. He began in the 289th year of the kingdom of Judah.

Place. — Judah and Jerusalem its capital. Manasseh was carried captive to Babylon for a time.

The Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed a quarter of a century before Manasseh began to reign.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Geo. Adam Smith's *Jerusalem from the Earliest Times*, Vol. 2, p. 181 — "Jerusalem under Manasseh."

Farrar is excellent in the *Expositor's Bible* on 2 Kings.

McFadyen's *Prayers of the Bible*, Manasseh's prayer as given in the Apocrypha.

LEARN BY HEART.

Isa. 55: 6, 7.

LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Southey's *Poems*, "The Inchcape Rock," where the warning was destroyed. Wm. Allen White's *A Certain Rich Man* is a powerful interpretation in modern terms of Manasseh's career.

Tennyson's "The Victim," helps us to understand the Moloch sacrifices of children.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Three Great Stages in the Life of King Manasseh.

THE STATE OF JUDAH DURING HIS REIGN.

I. HE WAS A LEADER IN THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL DETERIORATION OF HIS KINGDOM (vs. 1–10).

II. HE REAPS THE FRUIT OF HIS SIN (v. 11).
His punishment and the reasons for it.

III. HIS REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION (vs. 12–20).
Five steps. Certain losses.

The State of Judah During Manasseh's Reign.

Turning back to Lesson I., the last days of Hezekiah, and to the great deliverance from Assyria, when suddenly the Assyrian army vanished, we see Jerusalem left the one unviolated fortress on the long, ruin-strewn path of the invader.

THE GROWTH OF JERUSALEM. "From 701 Jerusalem began to assume that excessive predominance in Judah which gradually rendered the rest of the country but its fringe. We shall see this in several of Jeremiah's allusions."

The city must have grown in population and power, in commerce and wealth. Judah came in closer contact with the surrounding heathen nations, through business relations with them. Especially was this true of its connection with Assyria.

ASSYRIAN SUPREMACY. Assyria, during the reign of Manasseh was at its greatest height and widest bounds, — the mightiest world power of the time. Its greatest king was Assurbanipal, the Sardanapalus of the Greeks, B.C. 668–626. Under his father and himself Egypt became for the first time an Assyrian province, B.C. 670–660. Assurbanipal conquered all the region of Palestine on the shores of the Mediterranean from Tyre to Egypt. And while Jerusalem was not attacked, Judah was in a manner subject to Assyria, and doubtless paid tribute. For in the records of Assyria preserved in Nineveh "'Manasseh of Judah' appears twice as an Assyrian tributary: once in 677–6, when as one of twenty-two kings he paid homage to Esarhaddon as 'king of the *city* of Judah,' and again as one of the same group who furnished 'men and ships in addition to the customary tribute' on Assurbanipal's first campaign against Egypt in 668." — *Geo. Adam Smith.*

PEACE AND COMMERCE. During the long reign of Manasseh Jerusalem was at peace while the neighboring lands were harried by Assyrian armies, so that Jerusalem had a large share of the trade of Palestine. The king and his subjects benefited in many ways from "the immense increase of traffic caused by the inclusion of Egypt and Western Asia under one empire. The political rank of Jerusalem secured to her the chief markets of the internal commerce of Judah, as well as the gifts which it was customary for foreign traders to leave with the lords of the territories they visited; and thus in spite of the disadvantages of its site, the City must have become a considerable emporium." — *Geo. Adam Smith* in his

1. Ma-năs'seh [1] *was* twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem:

2. But he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto after the [2] abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

[1] 2 Kings 21: 1. [2] Deut. 18: 9; 2 Chron. 28: 3.

Jerusalem. Without doubt many of the Assyrian and Tyrian merchants resided in the city.

THE GREAT STONE LIBRARY AT NINEVEH increased the Assyrian influence over Judah. For Assurbanipal, the greatest of Assyrian sovereigns, "is far more memorable on account of his magnificent patronage of learning than on account of the greatness of his empire or the extent of his wars." For centuries Assyria had been a seat of learning, and a Royal Library had been gathered, which was removed by Sennacherib to Nineveh B.C. 705. Assurbanipal added more to the Assyrian royal library than all the kings who had gone before him. His agents sought everywhere for inscribed tablets, and brought them to Nineveh, and copied them there. The literary treasures of Babylon and many other cities enriched the great collection at Nineveh. The books were clay tablets, cylinders, great slabs, of which some thirty thousand have been found and carried away to various museums. It is on tablets written at Nineveh during Manasseh's reign that we have the Babylonian stories of Creation and the Deluge. The great library of Assurbanipal contained books on prayers, astronomy, geography, history, natural history, grammar, and ancient legends. The literary supremacy of Assyria was at its height.

THE PERVASIVE INFLUENCE OF ASSYRIA. "Never, since the time of the Tel-el-Amarna correspondence (B.C. 1500), had the civilization of Mesopotamia so permeated the life of Palestine." "The empire had reached the summit of its culture and of its ability to impress this upon its subject peoples." The two great monarchs "appear to have added to the number of Mesopotamian colonists in Samaria, who introduced the worship of their own gods, and whose influence upon the native customs of the province may be easily imagined by those who have seen the changes effected in social life east of the Jordan through the Circassian colonies introduced by the Turkish Government." — *Geo. Adam Smith* in his *Jerusalem* (1908).

Three Great Stages in the Life of Manasseh.

I. **Manasseh a Leader in the Religious and Moral Deterioration of His Kingdom.** — Vs. 1–10. MANASSEH was the son and heir of Hezekiah, a great, and, on the whole, good king. His mother's name was Hepzibah, "in whom is my delight" (2 Kings 21: 1), the delight of her husband. But whether she lived up to her name we do not know. **He was only twelve years old when he began to reign** in form. But "in Judah, as in England, a king was not supposed to be of age until he was eighteen. For six years Manasseh must have been to a great extent under the influence of his regents and counselors." — *Farrar*. He was the sixteenth king of Judah. **He reigned fifty and five years.** The longest reign in the history of Judah and Israel.

2. **And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.** Manasseh was king of the Lord's people, and his business was to carry out God's plan of a peculiar people who should teach the nations righteousness, and the true way of living.

Like unto the abominations of the heathen, the kind of life which tended to evil, cruelty, misery, ruin.

Whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel, when they entered the Promised Land. Because the cup of the iniquity of the Canaanites was full. "It is an eternal necessity that a nation such as the majority of the Canaanites then were, sinking deeper and deeper into a slough of discord and moral perversity, must fall before a people roused to a higher life by the newly awakened energy of unanimous trust in a Power Divine." — *Ewald*. "The heathenism of Palestine and Syria was so foul and degrading that there is no State, even at this time, which would not put it down, if necessary, by the severest penalties."

And now Manasseh was doing what he could to make Israel as bad as these nations.

INFLUENCES THAT LED HIM TO THIS COURSE. (1) He was a mere boy, unable at first to assert himself as a ruler.

3. For [a] he built again the high places which Hĕz-e-kī'ah his father had [1] broken down; and he reared up altars for [the] Bā'al-ĭm, and [2] made [groves, Ash'er-oth,] and worshipped [3] all the host of heaven, and served them.

4. [Also And] he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD [had] said, [4] In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.

5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven [5] in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6. [6 And he caused He also made] his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hĭn'nom: [7 also and] he [observed times, practised augury,] and used enchantments, and [used witchcraft, practised sorcery,] and [8] dealt with [a] [them that had] familiar [spirit, spirits,] and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

[1] 2 Kings 18: 4; 2 Chron. 30: 14; 31: 1; 32: 12.
[2] Deut. 16: 21.
[3] Deut. 17: 3.
[4] Deut. 12: 11; 1 Kings 8: 29; 2 Chron. 6: 6; 7: 16.
[5] 2 Chron. 4: 9.
[6] Lev. 18: 21; Deut. 18: 10; 2 Kings 23: 10; 2 Chron. 28: 3; Ezek. 23: 37.
[7] Deut. 18: 10.
[8] 2 Kings 21: 6.
a Heb., *he returned and built.*

(2) He was brought up in the harem. Even his good father could have little influence there, and he was busy with the great affairs of his kingdom. Doubtless he was waited on, petted, flattered, courted, treated as a superior being, whose will should never be checked, nor fancy thwarted; with no regular business, no hard tasks.

(3) For several years the kingdom was controlled by the leading men, who seem to have been favorable to the Assyrian party, and who had introduced the idolatrous customs, so that it was hard for a young man of 18 to break away from them.

Nabu-pal-iddina, King of Babylonia about B.C. 870, Worshiping in the Shrine of the Sun-god in the City of Sippara.

(4) As we have seen above the worldly and idolatrous influence was very strong. What Manasseh did was popular and fashionable; following the ways of the greatest, most cultured, most influential nation in the world, then the master of Judah. The people were doing business with the Assyrians. Trade demanded conformity. Society was dominated by Assyrian influences. Moreover, many doubtless used the same argument Rabshakeh used to Hezekiah (see Lesson I.), that the prosperity under heathen gods, and their conquering power proved that these gods were mightier than Jehovah the God of the little Province of Judah. (And yet the Assyrians were really near to destruction since their capital Nineveh was swept out of existence in 606 B.C.).

A CATALOGUE OF THE EVILS MANASSEH DID. (1) 3. **He built again the high places,** on the secluded hill tops "where Jehovah was professedly worshiped (2 Kings 18: 22), but with idolatrous rites" (*Speaker's Commentary*), and with all their immoralities.

(2) **Reared up altars for Baalim.** The idol gods of the heathen. **And made groves** (R.V., "Asheroth"). Wooden images or symbols of a licentious appearance and significance, connected with the worship of the Phœnician goddess of love. **And worshipped all the host of heaven.** The sun, moon, chief stars, and the twelve signs of the zodiac. "The sun was worshiped by incense on altars, and with the face toward the east. Chariots and horses were dedicated to him." — *Speaker's Commentary.*

(3) 4, 5. **He built altars in the house of the LORD, . . . in the two courts.** Thus desecrating the very Temple itself, putting idols on a par with God.

(4) 6. **He caused his children** (in 2 Kings, "his son") **to pass through the fire.** The sacrifice of children by fire was part of the worship of the Ammonite god Moloch.

7. And [1] he set the graven image (a carved) of the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Sŏl'o-mon his son, In [2] this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen (before) out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8. [3] Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from (out of) off the land which I have appointed for your fathers; (so that) if only they will (take heed) observe to do all that I have commanded them, (according to) even all the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.

[1] 2 Kings 21: 7. [2] Psa. 132: 14. [3] 2 Sam. 7: 10.

"At Carthage the victim was placed on the hands of a colossal image, from which it rolled into the fire." — *Hastings.*

Valley of the son of Hinnom. This valley runs from the west to the south of Jerusalem and joins the Kidron on the east. Near this junction, south of the Temple is Tophet, called also Gehenna, where were the perpetual fires in which the refuse of the city was burned. "He not only did this himself but did his utmost to make a popular institution of children-sacrifice, so that many practised it in the dreadful valley, and amid the rocks outside of Jerusalem." — *Farrar.*

One can get from Tennyson's "The Victim" an idea of the motive which led to this dreadful distortion of religion, which in the name of God committed the greatest cruelties and crimes, which were contrary to every principle of true religion, and which made God seem like a devil.

(5) Again Manasseh degraded true religion that was meant for the comfort and elevation of man, by leading his people away from the one true God, the only source of help, into all manner of useless, irrational, degrading enchantments by which the people sought for guidance and help. Thus these practices were treason and disloyalty. **Observed times.** Gathering omens as from sounds heard, or the flight of birds. The R.V. translates "practised augury." "'*Augury*' among the Romans consisted chiefly in observing *birds* and interpreting the observations made, but augurs observed also various natural phenomena." — *Cambridge Bible.*

Enchantments, the pretended art or act of producing effects by the aid of demons; the use of magic arts, spells or charms. — *Century Dictionary.*

Witchcraft. R.V., "sorcery." Sorcery was an effort to determine fate, not so much by foretelling as by working out the destiny by means of charms, or spells, or potions, or the use of objects which in themselves are supposed to possess power, or into which the sorcerer has himself infused efficacy. The Code of Hammurabi (2000 B.C.) legislates against witchcraft. The reason for this lies in the fact that such practices were contrary to the common social welfare. *The man who sought the sorcerer was endeavoring to gain an advantage over his fellow-men, and consequently became a public enemy.* — *Standard Bible Dictionary* (1909).

From an Underwood Stereograph.
Valley of Hinnom, South of Jerusalem.

Dealt with a familiar spirit, pretended to have knowledge and power, from unseen spirits. **Wizard** probably refers to the spirit which was the sorcerer's familiar or control. — *Standard Bible Dictionary.*

(6) **7. Set a carved image, the idol . . . in the house of God.**

9. So And Ma-năs'seh made Jū'dah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse so that they did evil more than did the heathen, nations, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

10. And the LORD spake to Ma-năs'seh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. gave no heed.

11. [1] Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host [a] of the king of As-syr'ĭ-a, which took Ma-năs'seh among the thorns, [b] in chains, and [2] bound him with fetters, and carried him to Băb'y-lon.

[1] Deut. 28: 36.
[2] Job 36: 8; Psa. 17: 10, 11.

a Heb., *which* were *the king's*.
b Or, *with hooks*.

The idol (2 Kings 21: 7) was the Asherah, the pillar of the Assyrian goddess of love and lust. This a worse defilement than the altars first placed there.

8. All this was done in defiance of God's commandments and of his promises conditioned on obedience.

(7) From 2 Kings 21: 16 we learn that Manasseh "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." He slew those who opposed him in these acts. He made martyrs of the true followers of the Lord.

9. **Do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed.** Not only did Manasseh do these things himself, but he led others into sin. "Jeremiah and Zephaniah both record that the cult of the host of heaven spread from the courts of the Temple to the housetops of Jerusalem; while Zephaniah describes the domestic preparation, in which children, fathers and mothers alike engaged, of *cakes to the Queen of Heaven*." — *Geo. Adam Smith.*

> "For sadder sight than eye can know,
> Than proud bark lost, or seaman's woe,
> Or battle fire, or tempest cloud,
> Or preybird's shriek, or ocean shroud,
> The shipwreck of a soul."

But there is one thing sadder than this, — the shipwrecking of the souls of others, the climbing to our own gains over the ruined souls and bodies of our fellow-men.

MANASSEH WARNED. 10. **And the LORD spake to Manasseh,** by means of the prophets, of whom Nahum may have been one; by means of his conscience, by the example of his father, by the written word, by providence.

II. **Manasseh Reaps the Fruit of His Sin.** — V. 11. It is not known just when Manasseh was made to pay the penalty of his sins, but it must have been after many years of idolatry.

Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria. The records of Assurbanipal record a review of the 22 Kings of whom Manasseh was one apparently at Nineveh. **Which took Manasseh among the thorns.** R.V., "in chains," margin, "with hooks." "Assyrian kings sometimes thrust a hook into the nostrils of their captives, and so led them about. The practice is illustrated on many Assyrian reliefs in the British Museum." — *Cambridge Bible.* "Isaiah had told Hezekiah that Jehovah would put his hook in the nose of Sennacherib, and his bridle in his lips, and turn him back by the way he had come, and Ezekiel, hereafter, was to tell the Pharaoh

Esarhaddon, King of Assyria.

Representing the submission of Tirhakah, (Ethiopian king of Egypt, 704 B.C.), the smaller figure, and of Baal, king of Tyre, to his authority. They are held by thongs passed through their lips.

12. And when he was in affliction, distress, he besought the LORD his God, and [1] humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers·

13. And he prayed unto him: and he was [2] intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Ma-năs'seh [3] knew that the LORD he was God.

[1] 1 Pet. 5: 6. [2] 1 Chron. 5: 20. [3] Psa. 9: 16.

that he would have hooks put in his jaws, as was done with the huge crocodile of his own canals (Isa. 37: 29; Ezek. 29: 4). This contemptuous torture now fell on one who had been as bitter an enemy to Jehovah as any of the heathen." — *Geikie.* **And bound him with fetters.** "Of bronze, as the Hebrew implies; literally, *of double bronze, i. e.*, on feet and hands." — *Wood.* **And carried him to Babylon.** Nineveh was the capital; but the mention of Babylon as the place of captivity rather than Nineveh may be accounted for by the fact that Babylon had been made subject to Nineveh the capital. "As a rule, the lot of a conquered vassal at the Assyrian court was horrible." — *Farrar.* Manasseh had a fine opportunity to observe in its perfection the idolatry he had foolishly imitated, and experience in his own person its fruits of cruelty. No wonder he came to loathe it.

THE REASON FOR THIS PUNISHMENT was to make Manasseh see the results of his course and turn from it. He must eat the fruit to induce him to cut down the tree that bore it.

He had been sailing down the Niagara rapids carelessly, and now he feels the tossing of the waves, the current swiftly flowing by the rocks, he sees spray over the cataract, and hears its roar.

Why? In order that he may stop ere it is too late.

You will recall Retzsch's well-known picture of the Game of Chess, where Satan is playing with a young man for his soul, the vices and temptations against the virtues and religion. But Manasseh was himself playing his vices against his own soul. He was throwing away his soul. His only hope was to be made to see himself on the verge of ruin, to "sit alone with his conscience." God's "Woe unto you" is the woe of love in order to save.

It is the same to-day. There are those in our own country who are repeating in modern ways the ancient sins of Manasseh, putting the idols of lust and selfishness in the soul that was made to be a temple of the Holy Ghost; doing all they can to bring ruin to their country by strong drink, by graft, by the "white slave" traffic, by injuring others for gain, by child labor, by making gain by impure food, by defying God's laws, in a thousand ways which are the heathenism and the idolatry of selfishness.

It is time for all prodigals to come to themselves and turn back to their Father's home.

It is wise for every one to look to the end of the course on which they are entering, and see if that is the good they wish to reach.

ILLUSTRATION. "Some persons are like children, who often, seeing in the theaters malefactors in gold-embroidered tunics and purple mantles, crowned and dancing, admire and applaud them as happy beings, until they appear on the stage goaded, and scourged, and with fire streaming from their gay and finely wrought apparel." — *Plutarch* on *The Delay of Divine Punishment.*

III. **Manasseh's Repentance and Restoration.** — Vs. 12-20. **And when he was in affliction.** R.V., "distress." The bitter fruits of his wrong doing wrought the desired effect. The prodigal came to himself.

(1) HE PRAYED. **He besought the LORD,** Jehovah, not the heathen gods he had been worshiping, who failed him in his trouble. A "Prayer of Manasseh" is preserved in the Apocrypha.

(2) **He humbled himself greatly** in confession of his sin, in the consciousness of the awfulness of his conduct. He saw himself as he was.

ILLUSTRATION. Dr. John Todd once represented the judgment day as our coming into a great hall whose walls were hung with pictures on which were painted all the sins that *we* have ever committed. On one picture are painted all the bad words that we have ever spoken; on another all the jealousies we have ever felt; on another all the covetings of our hearts, all the wrong bargains we have ever made, all the unkindness to our parents and friends of which we have ever been guilty, all our prayerless mornings and evenings, all our neglect of God's Word, all our ingratitude towards our heavenly Father and our hard feelings towards him, all our abuse of the Sabbath and the means of grace, all our neglect of

the Saviour and our grieving away the Holy Spirit. What pictures would our sins — open sins, secret sins, heart sins, and life-long sins — make! What a terrible hall that would be!

(3) GOD FORGAVE HIM. 13. **And he was intreated of him.** He had come to that place where God could wisely forgive him. God loves to forgive. He does not love to punish. As he tells us through Ezekiel: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live?

"Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

"Make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

"For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."

(4) PROOFS OF FORGIVENESS. God showed Manasseh clearly that he forgave him, by the fact that he **brought him again to Jerusalem.** We do not know how he influenced the king to restore him. "Such pardon from a king of Assyria was rare, but not unparalleled. Pharaoh Necho I. was taken in chains to Nineveh, and afterwards set free (*Schrader, K. A. T.*, p. 371)."

(5) PROOFS OF REPENTANCE. Manasseh began with new energy to strengthen the defences of the city, and the outlying districts (v. 14) against Assyria, and all other nations. Assyria began to decline in 647. According to Professor Beecher this was the year of Manasseh's return from Babylon, after a captivity of only a year or two, so that during the last six years of his reign, the influence of Assyria over Judah was greatly lessened. This made reforms more easy.

Then he began his religious reforms, cleansed the temple from idols, repaired Jehovah's altars, and reinstated the worship of the true God. At the evening time of his life there was light, dimmed, cloudy, but real.

NOTE. "The reformation of Julius Cæsar or of our Henry V., or, to take a different class of instances, the conversion of St. Paul, was nothing compared to the conversion of Manasseh. It was as though Herod the Great, or Cæsar Borgia had been checked midway in a career of cruelty and vice, and had thenceforward lived pure and holy lives, glorifying God by ministering to their fellowmen. Such a repentance gives us hope for the most abandoned." — *Professor Bennett* in *Expositor's Bible.*

NOTE that his repentance could not undo much of the evil his conduct had caused. It could not bring to life the innocent whom he had slain. It could not restore the families he had broken. It could not make good the characters he had defiled. It could not bring back the young he had led into vice and irreligion. He sailed forth on the sea of life, a young boy. His life-ship became a pirate ship, which sank many other ships. He wrecked his own vessel on the rocks of selfishness and irreligion, and idolatry and vice. He himself was saved with some of the cargo, but there was much that was lost beyond recovery.

YOUNG MAN, YOUNG WOMAN, LOOK AT THE PICTURE OF THIS KING'S LIFE, LISTEN TO THE BELL THAT TOLLS FROM THE ROCKS ON WHICH HE WAS WRECKED, AND TAKE WARNING.

LESSON IV. — July 23.

JOSIAH'S DEVOTION TO GOD. — 2 Chronicles 34: 1–13.

READ 2 Kings 22. COMMIT vs. 1, 2.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* — ECCL. 12: 1.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

It might be well to begin this lesson with a quotation from a sermon by my pastor, Rev. W. C. Gordon, Ph.D.

"A certain writer has told us of Francis of Assisi, who one day stepped down into the cloisters of his monastery and said to a young monk, 'Brother, let us go down into the town to-day and preach.' So they went forth, the venerable father and the young man, conversing as they went. Along the principal streets, around the lowly alleys, to the outskirts of the town, and to the village beyond they wound their way, returning at length to the monastery gate.

"Then spoke the young monk, 'Father, when shall we begin to preach?'

"'My child,' said Francis, looking kindly upon him, 'we have been preaching, we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen — looked at, our behavior has been remarked, and so we have delivered a morning sermon.'"

To-day we will let King Josiah preach us a sermon as we watch his work, and then see how much of it we can preach in our work of repairing all that needs repairing in our daily lives and character.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 1, 2; Psa. 119: 9; Eph. 2: 21, 22.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Josiah.
The times in which he lived.
Why was he different from Manasseh?
His energy in destroying evil.
Why was it necessary to build up the good?
How do temples and churches and religious services help us?
How can we help to build up our Sunday schools and churches?

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Parallel Account. — 2 Kings 22: 1–7; 23: 4–14.

Time. — Josiah began to reign B.C. 638, in the 345th year of Judah as a separate kingdom.

He reigned 31 years, till B.C. 608.

Place. — Judah and Jerusalem. But his reforms extended over a considerable part of the territory of the Northern Kingdom which had become extinct in 722–718, 80 years before Josiah came to the throne.

Prophets. — Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Adā'ĭăh; Ash'ĕrĭm; Azălī'ăh; Bā'ălĭm; Bŏz'căth (Bŏz'kăth); Hĭlkī'ăh; Jā'hăth; Jĕdī'dăh; Jō'ah; Jō'ăhăz; Jōsī'ăh; Kō'hăthītes; Măăsē'ĭăh; Mĕrā'rī; Mĕshŭl'lăm; Năph'tălī; Obădī'ăh; Pĕdā'ĭăh or Pĕdăī'ăh; Rū'măh (Roo'măh); Shā'phăn; Sĭm'ĕŏn; Zĕbū'dăh (Zĕboo'dăh) or Zĕbī'dăh; Zĕchărī'ăh; Zĕphŏnī'ăh.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Josiah the Boy King. Personal Conversion and National Reform.

JOSIAH AND HIS TIMES.

HIS LIFE WORK IN FIVE STAGES.

I. YOUTHFUL TRAINING FOR HIS LIFE WORK (vs. 1, 2).

II. JOSIAH'S CONVERSION (v. 3).

III. JOSIAH BEGINS NATIONAL REFORM (v. 3).

IV. REPAIRING THE TEMPLE.

V. THE GREAT REFORMATION.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Farrar in *Expositor's Bible* on 2 Kings, and Bennett on 2 Chronicles. *The Cambridge Bible.* George Adam Smith on *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, and his *Jerusalem*, Vol. 2. Crocket's *Harmony of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.* (Eaton and Mains.) Rogers' *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, Book III., Chap. XI. Maurice's *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, Sermon XXI. Phelps' *Studies of the Old Testament*, "A Talk about Josiah."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, on the Temple. Professor Starbuck's book on Conversion. Compare Savonarola's reforms in Florence as told in *Romola*. Herodotus on the influx of the Scythians and northern barbarians, Book I., sec. 74, 103–106; IV: 1–22.

Josiah and His Times.—1. JOSIAH was the grandson of Manasseh whose career we studied in our last lesson. He was born at Jerusalem, B.C. 646.

2. HIS FATHER was Amon who followed the example of his father's earlier years. He reigned but two years, when he was murdered by his courtiers in his own palace. The people rose against the conspirators and made his young eight-year old son king in his place.

3. JOSIAH'S MOTHER was Jedidah (signifying "darling"), the daughter of Adaiah ("Jehovah has adorned"). They belonged in Boscath, a town near Lachish in southwestern Judah, in the plains toward the Mediterranean Sea.

While King Amon was an idolater, and his court was corrupt, it is possible that Josiah's mother kept the true faith.

1. Jo-sī'ah [1] was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. (was: was; thirty: one; in Jerusalem.)
2. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither turned not aside to the right hand, nor or to the left.

[1] 2 Kings 22: 1.

4. HE BEGAN TO REIGN when he was eight years old. Like his grandfather Manasseh he must for several years have been guided, and his kingdom controlled by his mother or by prime ministers. The worshipers of Jehovah must have been in control at the palace, the wise and religious teachers of the true God and the true religion. So that for the first 16 years of his life the young Josiah must have been under good influences, while he also would know of his father's tragic death, and his grandfather's sins, sufferings, and repentance. And his ancestor David was ever before him as his ideal, his hero, his saint.

5. MARRIAGE. He married, at the age of 13 (2 Kings 22: 1 compared with 23: 36), Zebudah (R.V. Zebidah), the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah, a village near Shechem.

6. THE CHARACTER OF HIS REIGN. **2. He did that which was right.** "He left the brightest name for piety and religious zeal among all the successors of David. He shares with Hezekiah the praise of walking perfectly in the way of his father David. His reign marks the last glory of the earthly kingdom of David."—*W. Smith.* **In the sight of the LORD.** And not merely in the eyes of men; his *heart* was right. **And walked in the ways of David his father,** *i.e.*, his ancestor. "In *all* the ways," it is said in 2 Kings. **And declined** (R.V., "turned not aside") **neither to the right hand, nor to the left.** Neither to the right hand, into excess of zeal, or formal religion, or pride; nor to the left hand, into negligence, idolatry, and the breaking of the moral law. He kept in the straight path of righteousness and religion, and thus became one of the most honored of earth's heroes.

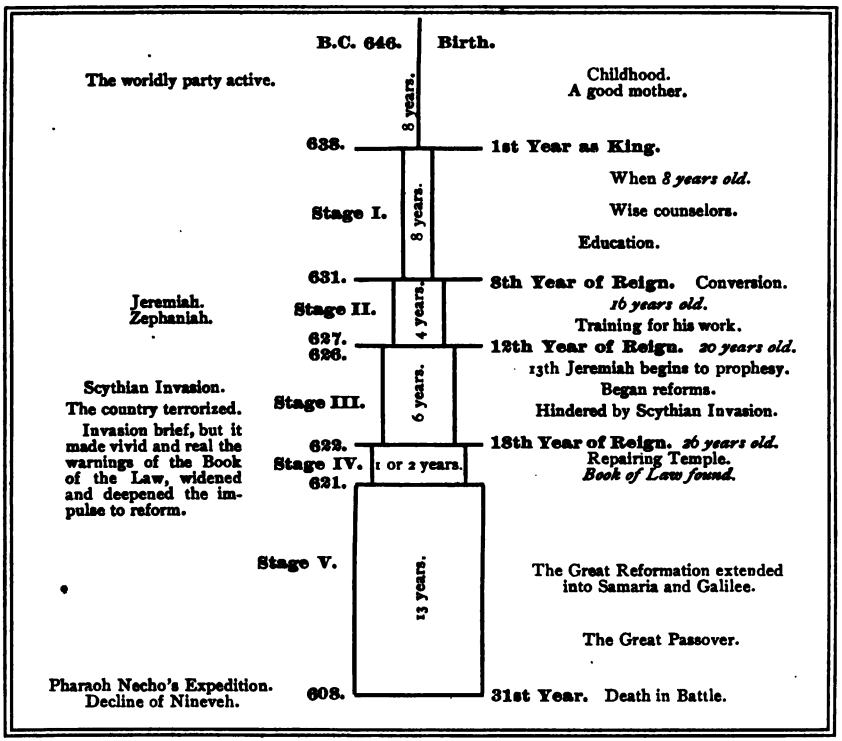
7. THE POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS SITUATION DURING JOSIAH'S YOUTH. There had been a change for the better during the latter years of Manasseh, which the short reign of Amon could not destroy. The revolutions against Amon and against his murderers show the power of the better element of the people. Yet very much was left undone, and probably the majority of the people were deeply infected with idolatry and its immoralities. And this party gained strength during the youth of the new king. We learn about the state of things from the earlier chapters of Jeremiah. Assyria was too busy with its own troubles to make any further invasions. And Manasseh had strengthened the defences of Jerusalem and the fortified towns of Judah.

8. But about the time when Josiah was 20 years old, and in the twelfth year of his reign, when he had begun his reforms, there came an invading host from the far East like a cyclone, an overwhelming scourge. Jeremiah foretells them in vivid pictures. But Herodotus tells us who they were, the Scythians "from the regions over Caucasus, vast nameless hordes of men, who sweeping past Assyria, unchecked, poured upon Palestine. We can realize the event from our knowledge of the Mongol and Tartar invasions which in later centuries pursued the same path southwards. Living in the saddle, and (it would seem) with no infantry nor chariots to delay them, these Centaurs swept on with a speed of invasion hitherto unknown. In 630 they had crossed the Caucasus, by 626 they were on the borders of Egypt. Psamtik (Pharaoh of Egypt) succeeded in purchasing their retreat, and they swept back again as swiftly as they came. They followed the old Assyrian war-path," through the lowlands along the Mediterranean. Judah escaped because the great central range of hills lay between their path and Jerusalem. "But they shook the whole of Palestine into consternation." — *Geo. Adam Smith*, in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

The prophet Jeremiah describes in vivid and picturesque terms this invasion (Jeremiah 4—6). "The lion is come up from his thicket"; "The destroyer of nations is on his way"; "Behold he cometh as clouds, and his chariot shall be as the whirlwind"; "Their quiver is an open sepulcher, they are all mighty men"; "They are cruel and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men of war against thee."

It is easy to see how this terrible invader, coming so near, just as Josiah was beginning his reforms, must have interfered with his plans.

The following diagram will enable us to see more clearly the work of Josiah and the successive stages.



First Stage. Youthful Training for His Life Work. — Josiah seems to have been under good influences from the beginning, and to have chosen to yield to them.

He was not old enough when he became king to have any part in the counsels of the nation. But he was receptive, and the first eight years of his reign were a period of education and training. From his later life we know that he must have been faithful, and studied. He did not sow the "wild oats" of dissipation, for from them he could not have reaped the harvest of golden grain.

THE MODERN BOY has been appointed by God to a glorious kingdom of usefulness and goodness; and how much of it he shall gain and rule depends largely on what he is and does when a boy.

"Modern psychology is making clear that, after adolescence is past, little can be done to change radical moral tendency in human character. The incompetent, the drunken, the vicious and the criminal of adult age are seldom reformed. Many seeming reformations are unreal, while the few real reformations in adult life, if their history were accurately known, would be seen to be the result of influences acting upon the nature before adolescence.

"'The bad are recruited from the cradle.' Most psychologists put the determination of dominant tendency between birth and fourteen years of age.

"An ounce of formation is worth a ton of reformation. Reformation is beginning at the wrong end. Childhood holds the key to the salvation of the world. Save one generation of children and you immensely simplify and reduce the problem of dealing with 'the bad.'

"This is the truth to which society is slowly opening its eyes: The Kingdom of God will come on earth mainly through the gateway of childhood."

Second Stage. Josiah's Conversion. THE EIGHTH TO THE TWELFTH YEAR OF HIS REIGN.— V. 3. **In the eighth year of his reign,** when 16 years old. He was

3. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to [1] seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began [2] to purge Jū'dah and Jerusalem [3] from the high places, and the groves, Ash'er-im, and the carved graven images, and the molten images.

4. [4] And they brake down the altars of the Bā'al-ĭm in his presence; and the images, sun-images, that were were on high above them, he cut hewed down; and the groves, Ash'er-im, and the carved graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, of them, [5] and strowed it upon the [a] graves of them of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5. And he [6] burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed purged Jū'dah and Jerusalem.

6. And *so did he* in the cities of Ma-năs'seh· and E'phră-ĭm· and Sĭm'e-on, even unto Năph'ta-lī, with in their [b] mattocks ruins round about.

7. And when he had broken brake down the altars, and beat the groves, Ash'er-im and had 7 beaten the graven images [c] into powder, and cut hewed down all the idols sun-images throughout all the land of Israel, he and returned to Jerusalem.

[1] 2 Chron. 15: 2.
[2] 1 Kings 13: 2.
[3] 2 Chron. 33: 17, 22.
[4] Lev. 26: 30; 2 Kings 23: 4.
[5] 2 Kings 23: 6.
[6] 1 Kings 13: 2.
[7] Deut. 9: 21.

a Heb., *face of the graves.*
b Or, *mauls*, or, *axes.*
c Heb., *to make powder.*

standing on the threshold of his manhood and its duties. **He began to seek after the God of David his father,** ancestor. No one could see before himself so stupendous a task as lay before Josiah, and not feel the need of wisdom, power, and guidance from God. Josiah knew what God had done for David. How he had guided his youth, had given him the victory over Goliath and a greater victory over himself; how he had given him wisdom in trying circumstances, built up his kingdom, established the true religion. No wonder that he should pray Solomon's prayer: "O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king; and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." (1 Kings 3: 5-14.)

For four years more Josiah was studying his problems, counselling with the leaders, and preparing for his great work. "There was a circle of remarkable persons in or around the palace and temple, who, possibly driven together by the recent persecutions, had formed a compact band, which remained unbroken till the fall of the monarchy itself. Amongst these the most conspicuous at this time were Shaphan the secretary, Hilkiah the high priest, and Huldah the prophetess, who, with her husband Shallum, himself of the priestly race, and keeper of the royal wardrobe, lived close by the temple precincts. Within this circle the king had grown up, with another youth destined to be yet more conspicuous than the king himself — the prophet Jeremiah." — *Stanley.*

"I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain or plain or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
I'll be what you want me to be."
— *Consecration Hymn* by *Mary Brown.*

CONSECRATION TO GOD with all the heart and soul is the essential condition of the best service for country and for true reform.

"Our wills are ours we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

Third Stage. Josiah Begins to Reform the Religious Life of the Nation. — V. 3. **In the twelfth year** of his reign, when he was 20 years old. **He began to purge Judah.** Notice the "began," for it helps to understand what at first seems contradictory. In Chronicles the great reformation is placed before the repair of the Temple, and the finding of the Book of the Law (our next lesson), while in 2 Kings the finding of the Book of the Law comes first, and the great Reformation is the natural effect of the bursting upon their hearts and consciences, from the new-found Book of the Law, of the terrible curses that follow idolatry, and the wonderful blessings that crown the religion of the Lord.

8. Now [1] in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shā'phan the son of Az-a-lī'ah, and Mā-a-sē'iah the governor of the city, and Jō'ah the son of Jō'a-hăz the [a] recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

9. And when they came to Hĭl-kī'ah the high priest, they and delivered [2] the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Lē'vītes, that kept the keepers of the doors door, had gathered of the hand of Ma-năs'seh and E'phrā-ĭm, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Jū'dah and Bĕn'ja-min; and they returned to of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

10. And they put ff in delivered it into the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, gave it to repair amend and amend repair the house:

11. Even even to the artificers carpenters and to the builders gave they ff it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor make beams for the houses which the kings of Jū'dah had destroyed.

12. And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were were Jā'hăth and O-ba-dī'ah, the Lē'vītes, of the sons of Me-rā'rī; and Zĕch-a-rī'ah and Me-shŭl'lam, of the sons of the Kō'hath-ītes, to set ff it forward; and *other of* the Lē'vītes, all that could skill of instruments of musick. music.

[1] 2 Kings 22: 3. [2] 2 Kings 12: 4. *a* Or, *chronicler.*

Josiah *began* his reformation in his twelfth year, but the great invasion of the Scythians soon after this beginning interfered with the work. The savage and cruel host came close to Judah's borders. Scattered bands may have entered the kingdom. Terror reigned. Defences must be strengthened. Outsiders rushed to Jerusalem and the fortified cities. How far the reformation had progressed we do not know. But the Chronicler having recorded the beginning simply goes on with the story, as is frequently done by historians. We will take up the story in chronological order.

Clay Figure of Astarte.
Found at Taanach, in Southern Galilee. Height, 4½ inches.

Fourth Stage. The Repairing of the Temple.— Vs. 8–13. **In the eighteenth year of his reign,** when he was 26 years old. **When he had purged,** cleansed from its idols, and insignia of idol worship, **the land,** Jerusalem and its surroundings, **and the house,** the Temple and its courts, as recorded in v. 3. **From the high places** of idolatrous worship, and **the groves,** the Asherim, the carved pillars which represented the vile worship of the Assyrian Venus, **carved images** of other idols, and **the molten images** of metal, such as Manasseh had placed in the very courts of the Temple (2 Kings 21: 5), and throughout the city (2 Chron. 33: 15).

The restoration of the Temple was entrusted to a committee of three,— **Shaphan** the secretary of state (2 Kings 23: 3); **and Maaseiah the governor of the city,** the Mayor of Jerusalem; **and Joah the recorder,** the keeper of the records, the historian.

To repair the house of the LORD. The Temple built by Solomon, was completed 390 years before. It was repaired by Joash 240 years before Josiah began his restoration. The ravages of time, with neglect and abuse during the sway of idolatry must have rendered it sadly in need of repair.

9. **They came to Hilkiah the high priest.** An ancestor of Ezra. **Delivered the money that was brought into the house of God,** that he might pay it to the work-

13. Also *they were* they were over the bearers of burdens, and *were* overseers of set forward all that wrought did the work in any every manner of service: [1] and of the Le'vites *there were* there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

[1] 1 Chron. 23: 4, 5.

men. The money had been collected from the people of Judah and the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim of the Northern Kingdom, and from the city of Jerusalem. **They returned** to should read "and from the inhabitants of" (R.V.).

11. **Artificers.** R.V., "carpenters." **To floor,** "to make beams for" (R.V.).

12. **Kohathites,** descendants of Kohath, second son of Levi.

It was during these repairs that the Book of the Law was found.

Ye Are the Temple of the Living God.
What Repairs Does This Temple Need?

Cleanse away the remains of selfishness, and cast out all "the works of the flesh" as named in Gal. 5: 19–21.

Set up the family altar, repair your study of God's Word. Renew the love whose decline is expressed in the neglect of courtesies and services to man. Repair your application of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22, 23) to business dealings and all departments of life. Repair your habits. Repair your temper. Cleanse your bodies from habits that lead to ill health, and make your bodies perfect instruments for your life's work, and worthy temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Search each one for himself to learn what repairs are needed in his heart and life. And make the renovation thorough.

From Nielsen.

The Court of the High Place above Petra.

The altar is in the recess at the center of the left hand side of the court.

Fifth Stage. The Great Reformation. — Vs. 4–7; 2 Kings 23: 4–20. The work interrupted by the Scythian hordes is now resumed with greatly increased intensity and enthusiasm, through the new consecration of king and people, due to the finding of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 23: 3, 4).

Brake down the altars of Baalim, plural of Baal, because he was worshiped in many forms. **In his presence.** That the king might see the work thoroughly done, and that his personal authority might bear down opposition to a deed which so many would consider sacrilege. **And the images.** R.V., "the sun-images." Symbolic representations of the sun, of licentious significance (McCurdy, *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, § 321). "This turning of men from the pure glory of Jehovah in the Shechinah to do homage by bestial rites to the sun-god, was the climax of abominations."

From 2 Kings 23: 11 we learn that he took away the triumphal car of the sun-god, and the horses that drew it in processions, which had been placed near the entrance to the house of the Lord. **Groves, . . . carved . . . and . . . molten images.** See on v. 3 above. All these impure symbols of a forbidden worship Josiah, in fierce and righteous indignation, had ground to powder, and the dust strewn **upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.** Perhaps with a double purpose, — as a mark of dishonor to the graves themselves, the memorials of those that had given themselves to this iniquity; and also to complete the defilement of the idols, since all graves were regarded as unclean.

See 2 Kings 23 for a fuller account of these stirring scenes, including the defilement of Tophet, where children had been burned to death in honor of Molech, and the destruction of the houses of the Sodomites, the immoral women who conducted the worst orgies that polluted the temple.

5. **And he burnt the bones of the priests** taken out of their sepulchers. This he did to defile the altars and thus put them out of commission (2 Kings 23: 16). But at

Samaria he executed priests as well as burned their bones (2 Kings 23: 20). The priests so far away he could not control, as he could those near by.

6. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim. To the north, the greater part of Samaria. **And Simeon.** In the extreme south. **Even unto Naphtali.** In the extreme north. "From Beersheba to Dan." **With their mattocks round about.** "With their axes," referring to the breaking down of the altars and idols. Better translated, as in R.V., "in their ruins," the ruins as they were made by the Assyrian kings, Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon, when they subdued the Northern Kingdom and deported many of the people.

FOR MODERN TIMES.

The first condition of salvation for individuals or nations is the putting away of sin at any cost. The second is the building up of the good, which we consider in our next lesson.

He that confesseth and *forsaketh* shall find mercy.

The greatest revival of religion I have ever known was begun in meetings where the pastor called upon his church members on a fast day to confess and forsake their sins.

"How many of you have neglected family prayers?" Several arose and one was called upon to pray.

"How many of you have been speaking evil of others?" Several arose. One led in prayer for all. And so through the list.

"DURING THE LAST FEW MONTHS there has been a remarkable revival in the territory made famous in the recent Japanese-Russian war.

"The movement began in February in Liaoyang, spread at once to Mukden, and, soon after, to Haicheng, Fakumen, Newchwang, and numberless towns and villages and hamlets of less fame.

"Rev. J. Webster, of the United Free Church of Scotland Mission, located at Mukden, wrote a series of letters to the home church, describing the revival; and these letters, just now issued from Shanghai as a small pamphlet, form the basis of the following notes on God's most recent blessing to the Chinese.

"A mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit came to the Christians immediately after the opening of the meetings, and His power became manifest at once in heart-breaking confession of sin; then in outbursts of prayer, both petition and intercession, in great joy, and, finally, in thank-offerings to God of money and of service. It was a case of complete surrender to God.

"Two men were overheard in conversation. 'Why did you make such a fool of yourself to-night at the meeting? You have lost face before every one,' said the first in anger. 'If you wanted to confess sin, could you not have gone home and prayed in your own room?'

"The reply came impressively and in tones of deep awe: 'Do you think I wanted to stand up before every one and confess the awful sins I did? No, I struggled in agony against the impulse; but, my brother, when the Spirit of God tells you to get up on your feet and confess, you've got to do it!'

"It was such an experience as came to hundreds, even thousands, of other Christians in Manchuria this spring. Elders, agents, deacons, evangelists, members young and old, inquirers, backsliders, confessed to having committed one or another of all the sins in the decalogue. Secret idolatry, fraud, theft, opium-smoking, gambling, deceit — these were the burdens from which many a heart was freed." — *Christian Endeavor World*, Sept. 10, 1908.

A NEW LEAF.

He came to my desk with a quivering lip —
The lesson was done —
"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said;
"I have spoiled this one."
In place of the leaf so stained and blotted,
I gave him a new one all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled —
"Do better now, my child."

I went to the throne with a quivering soul —
The old year was done —
"Dear Father, hast thou a new leaf for me?
I have spoiled this one."
He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,
And gave me a new one all unspotted,
And into my sad heart smiled —
"Do better now, my child."

— *Episcopal Recorder.*

LESSON V. — July 30.

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

2 Chronicles 34: 14–33.

PRINT vs. 14–21, 29–33. COMMIT v. 21. READ chapters 34 and 35.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* — PSA. 119: 11.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

This lesson is so closely connected with the last, that it can best begin with a brief review, noting the point in the former lesson where this one comes in. The general view of the times belongs to this lesson also. Here is a fine opportunity of teaching one's scholars how to read and study the Bible, and urge them to it.

LEARN BY HEART.

V. 31; Deut. 6: 6–9.

ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

How the Book of the Law could be lost.
The Providential circumstances that led to its finding.
How its reading produced such wonderful effects.
How do people now lose their Bible?
In what ways may we find it?
The best ways of reading the Bible.
Different ways of studying it.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Ab'dŏn; Ahī'kăm; Asāī'ăh; Hăs'răh; Hĭlkī'ăh; Hŭl'dăh; Jŏsī'ăh; Shăl'lŭm; Shā'phăn; Tīk'văth.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B.C. 621, in the 18th year of Josiah's reign, when he was 26 years old. Stage IV. of the last lesson.

Place. — The Temple and Palace at Jerusalem.

Persons. — Josiah the king. Huldah the prophetess. Hilkiah the high priest. Shaphan the scribe or secretary.

Parallels. — 2 Kings 22: 8—23: 4. 2 Kings 23: 21–23 is a summary of 2 Chron. 35: 1–19.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: How the Bible Is Lost and Found.

I. THE LOST BIBLE.

II. HOW THEY FOUND THEIR BIBLE (vs. 14–18).

III. WHAT THE READING OF THE BIBLE ACCOMPLISHED (vs. 19–33).

(1) The awakened consciousness of sin.
(2) Seeking counsel.
(3) Study of the Bible.
(4) A public covenant.
(5) Reforms.
(6) Training by religious services.

How we may lose the Bible.
How we may find the Bible.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries, etc., as in the last Lesson. Professor Moulton's *Literary Study of the Bible* is unsurpassed in its line. *The Bible and Its Supremacy*, *The Messages of the Books*, by Farrar, are remarkably helpful. Wiener's *Essays on Pentateuchal Criticism* (1909) maintains that Deuteronomy, the found Book of the Law, belongs to the time of Moses. There are three books lately published which will give no little aid to those who would find the Bible in our day, viz., *The Charm of the Old Book*, by Prof. George Huntingdon (1909. 90 cts. net. American Sunday School Union). *The Fascination of the Book*, by Professor Work ($1.25. Revell). *The Magnetism of the Bible*, by Rev. Malcolm MacPhail, M.A. (75 cts. net. 1909. American Sunday School Union.)

THE LESSON IN ART.

Huldah and the Book of the Law, by an unknown artist.* *Josiah and the Book of the Law*, by Von Schnorr.*

* Wilde's Bible Pictures.

I. **The Lost Bible.** — With hundreds of millions of Bibles in existence and several millions more printed every year, it is somewhat difficult for us to imagine how knowledge of the written Bible, and of the exact tenor of its teachings could be lost. Some facts will help us to understand.

1. It is not stated that there was no knowledge of the existence of the Word and Law of God, so far as it had been written before this time. The Temple and its services, and the reforms of Josiah, imply that there was such knowledge.

2. There were at that time very few copies of the sacred books in existence. They were very expensive. It was customary for these copies to be kept in the Temple, while "the copy which (according to the Law) was made for the use of the king, would most certainly have perished" under such kings as Manasseh and Amon. Very few of the people could read the Law even if it had been within their reach. A modern illustration is the case of Europe before the Reformation, where even in the monasteries the Bible was almost an unknown book. Luther was twenty years old before he ever saw a copy.

The Book of the Law.

3. "The priests in the matter of religious services and sacrifices in the Temple taught the people by word of mouth what was proper in every part of the ceremonial, and much of the priestly training was traditional, passed on from one generation of priests to another."— *Cambridge Bible.* So in the ages before printing was invented this was the principal way in which the people learned the Bible, and what they learned depended on the kind of priest who taught. The pictures and carvings in the cathedrals aided in teaching the story of Bible events. But few read the book itself. It was in Latin, and not in the language of the people.

4. For seventy years the Temple and its services had been neglected, as we have seen in our last two lessons. The priesthood had little power to instruct even if they desired to. And all such teachings as stirred the soul of Josiah would be wholly neglected.

Thus it is easy to realize that the Temple-copy of the Law was put in hiding to save it from being destroyed, and the hiding place was forgotten during the long time in which it was unsafe to bring it forth.

WHAT WAS THE BOOK OF THE LAW THAT WAS LOST? "It is generally agreed that the law on which the reformation was based was the Deuteronomic Code, but how much of our present book of Deuteronomy was discovered by Hilkiah is a question on which critics are divided." — *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible.* It must have contained the 28th chapter in which the blessings and curses are found, and no small part of the laws themselves. The *Cambridge Bible* thinks it contained Deuteronomy 5—26 and 28.

The Book was written by hand, and was on rolls like the cut above, though sometimes it had only one roll like a Book of Esther which I have from Jerusalem. The book of Deuteronomy would make a large roll. Such can be seen in any Jewish synagogue at their hours of worship.

It is plain that the finding of this book "was not the discovery of something unknown before, but the rescuing of the Temple-copy of the Law from the hiding place in which it had long lain." — *Cambridge Bible.*

It must have been the ancient copy of the law, and not a book written, as some critics think, by unknown persons in the reign of Manasseh, "never seen or used among the Jews before." That an unknown book with no authority behind it should produce the effect on Josiah and his people, which this Book of the Law produced, borders on the absurd. Moreover many of the laws must have been familiar to Josiah for they had been acted upon by his ancestors in every reform, and by himself in the reforms he began six years

14. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, HĬL-KĪ'AH the priest [1] found [a] the book of the law of the LORD [given] [a] by MOSES.

15. And HĬL-KĪ'AH answered and said to SHĀ'PHAN the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And HĬL-KĪ'AH delivered the book to SHĀ'PHAN.

16. And SHĀ'PHAN carried the book to the king, and [moreover] brought the king word [back] again, saying, All that was committed [b] to thy servants, they do [it].

17. And they have [c] [gathered together] [emptied out] the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and [to] [into] the hand of the workmen.

18. [Then] [And] SHĀ'PHAN the scribe told the king, saying, HĬL-KĪ'AH the priest hath [given] [delivered] me a book. And SHĀ'PHAN read [it] [therein] before the king.

[1] 2 Kings 22: 8.
a Heb., *by the hand of.*
b Heb., *to the hand of.*
c Heb., *poured out.*

before, in the twelfth year of his reign. "It would have been impossible to impose upon the people, and make them believe that a new book, never before heard of, was the law of their kingdom from God." — *Geikie.*

"It was only eight hundred years since the death of Moses, and we possess manuscripts of a much older date than that. In the dry climate of Palestine there would have been no difficulty about the preservation of a manuscript parchment. The book is inscribed as the book of the law, in or by the hand of Moses. The book of the law as written by Moses was, by his order, deposited in the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31: 26)." — *Lyman Abbott.* The fact that Joshua made the people take the same covenant with the same motives, shows that this Book of the Law was existing in his time. Again the fact that Jerusalem is not mentioned in it shows that it was older than the Temple.

LIGHT FROM THE ORIENT. "From time immemorial the religious East has closely associated temples with books, and made the former the depositaries of the latter. The greatest, oldest and best Biblical manuscripts, such as the Codex Sinaiticus and the Syriac Gospels, have been discovered among other neglected and forgotten books in Oriental temples or monasteries." — *Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie* in *Sunday School Times.* See the interesting story of the finding of the Bible manuscripts in Kenyon's *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts.*

II. **How They Found Their Bible.** — Vs. 14–18. **When they brought out** from the old chests in the Temple, **the money** contributed for the repairs, which had been deposited in the safest hiding place, **Hilkiah the priest,** who had charge of the money, in searching the chest found at the bottom **a book of the law of the LORD,** the law **given by Moses.**

15–18. **Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan,** King Josiah's Secretary of State, as the fitting person to show it to the king. When Shaphan reported the contributions and the work on the Temple, he brought the book with him, told how it had been found, and read it to the king.

IN A MUCH DEEPER SENSE JOSIAH FOUND THE BIBLE. "It must be remembered that for 5 years Jeremiah, a young man (Jer. 1: 2, 6, in Josiah's 13th year 4 or 5 years before this) had been prophesying in Jerusalem and Judah, and saying the very same things which, when read from the book, shook Josiah's soul. The king may never have heard him or of him, or he may have heard him and not been touched by him, as he now was by the venerable roll and

Scribe. *In the Louvre.*

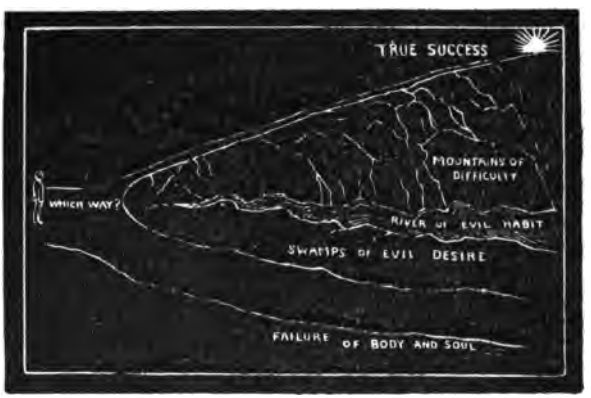
19. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

20. And the king commanded Hĭl-kī'ah, and A-hī'kam the son of Shā'phan, and [a]Ab'dŏn the son of Mī'cah, and Shā'phan the scribe, and A-sa-ī'ah [a servant of the king's, the king's servant,] saying,

21. Go, [enquire, ye, inquire] of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Jū'dah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do [after according unto] all that is written in this book.

a Or, *Achbor*, 2 Kings 22: 12.

its words from out of the past. But in any case he is just an instance of how a man sometimes sees truths which he has often heard before without much attention to them, blaze up all at once into letters of fire, and all but scorch his eyeballs. There is a latent power in religious commonplaces which makes them sometimes start up into terrible newness."—*Maclaren.*



III. **What the Reading of the Bible Accomplished.** — Vs. 19–33. FIRST. IT AWAKENED THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN. **When the king had heard . . . he rent his clothes,** the Oriental way of expressing great grief. (21) **For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us.** Turn to Deuteronomy 28, and read the powerful statement of the results of disobeying God and the blessedness of obedience, —results which the whole history of Israel illustrates; and which are as true to-day in the working out of God's laws as they were then. It is useless to say that these results of obedience and disobedience were only Old Testament teachings, which are outgrown in the New. Jesus taught the same truth over and over again.

What is the difference then?

It is that Jesus brought infinitely greater helps and motives for doing right; forgiveness, love, hope; and intensified every influence for redemption from sin.

NOTE that Josiah's fear was for his country chiefly. He himself had tried to do right and serve God. But he saw his kingdom going to ruin.

NOTE that not to have a clear vision of the end of the route we are traveling is simply folly. The business man frequently sees two courses before him, and before he chooses, he considers which one leads to success, and which to ruin. The young man or woman is continually facing a choice at the parting of the ways, — temptation, the wine cup, dishonesty, dissipation, disobedience to God's laws, and duty, religion, truth, — and only the fool refuses to see where the paths lead. "Robert Arnold's angel replied, 'May his eyes be opened to see life *as heaven sees it!*' And the recording angel said softly, 'Amen!'"—*C. M. Sheldon.*

SECOND. THE KING SOUGHT WISE COUNSEL, vs. 20–29. He sent several of his officers to inquire of the Lord through his prophet. They went to Huldah, a mature prophetess, well known as a devoted worshiper of Jehovah, and wise revealer of his will. She confirmed the message of the book. There was no hope for the nation but in repentance. The nation had gone so far in sin, were so thoroughly imbued with idolatry, that

29. [1] Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Jū'dah and Jerusalem.

30. And the king went up (into to) the house of the LORD, and all the men of Jū'dah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Lē'vītes, and all the people, (both [a] great and small): and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

31. And the king stood [b] in [2] his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant (which are that were) written in this book.

32. And he caused all that were (present found) in Jerusalem and Bĕn'ja-min to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33. And Jo-sī'ah took away all the [3] abominations out of all the countries that (*pertained* pertained) to the children of Israel, and made all that were (present found) in Israel to serve, (even even) to serve the LORD their God. [4] (*And* All) his days they departed not [c] from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

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[1] 2 Kings 23: 1.
[2] 2 Kings 11: 14; 23: 3; 2 Chron. 6: 13.
[3] 1 Kings 11: 5.
[4] Jer. 3: 10.

a Heb., *from great even to small.*
b Or, *upon his pillar*, see 2 Kings 23: 3.
c Heb., *from after.*

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nothing could persuade them, as a whole, to repent and be saved. Nothing but the actual infliction of the threatened punishment would cleanse them from idolatry. The reformation of Josiah was of great value, but it was the wind ruffling the surface of the waters, but not the entire changing of their deeper flow. Yet the final destruction would not come during Josiah's lifetime. He would be spared the awful scenes which began 16 years later, 3 years after his death, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, B.C. 605. He was spared because he had been faithful.

Rejoicing in this delay was not a selfish joy on the part of Josiah. On the contrary, because he had been faithful to God, he was enabled to do all that could be done, for 13 years, to save the nation from destruction.

THIRD. A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW BY ALL THE PEOPLE, vs. 29, 30. The king had heard the book read.

Then he assembled **the elders . . . and the priests, and the Levites.** The political and religious leaders.

30. And all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, . . . and all the people, great and small. The same words which had stirred the king's heart were read to them by the king himself, in the court of the Temple, surrounded by the repairs that were being made. The people must be awakened and instructed. They must see the danger of going on as they had been, and the only way to blessedness and prosperity. The whole nation must change their course. The king alone could do very little toward reform, if the people were indifferent or opposed. This is the true method of reform, — education and inspiration of the people. The authority of God himself was behind the movement.

FOURTH. THEY MADE A PUBLIC COVENANT AND PLEDGE, vs. 31, 32. The king himself first **made a** public **covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, . . . with all his heart.** The people all followed his example.

This was very similar to the great meeting under Joshua on the slopes of Mount Ebal and Gerizim eight centuries before, on taking possession of the Promised Land. The same motives were presented, and the same covenant made. And the king might well have said to the people as Joshua did: "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him."

And they said, "We are witnesses."

The covenant was made under the power of the strongest and best motives that could be brought to bear upon them, when their minds were uplifted into clearest vision, above

the smoke and clouds of earth. That was the right time to make a decision. God has given us feelings on purpose to move us to decide aright.

NOTE. There is great power in a public profession of our covenant with God. It is a real and strong help toward a true life, especially under temptation.

"A pledge marks the crossing of a line. It is the decision which he makes which fixes his status; and when he has made that decision there is no reason why he should object to its being known unless he is either ashamed of it or afraid that he cannot keep it. The pledge helps to determine the circle of his acquaintances, and that environment is helpful." — *Hon. Wm. J. Bryan* in *Christian Endeavor World.*

The church is disgraced, and the Lord is dishonored, if we fail to keep our covenant, even as the nation is dishonored if we act unworthily of its principles.

FIFTH. The king, the leaders and the people went forth through city and country in a great purifying of the nation from idolatry, as described in our last lesson. This putting their covenant into action was of great value in enabling them to keep it.

SIXTH. RESTORATION OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES as the means of keeping the people true to their covenant, 2 Kings 23: 21–22; 2 Chronicles 35. Josiah restored the regular temple services under the priests and Levites; and he celebrated "a passover, such as had not been celebrated 'from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah' (2 Kings 23: 22). From all parts of the land the people flocked up to the renovated temple, and joined with every demonstration of gladness in the eight days' festivity prepared for them. Thirty thousand males of full age attended (2 Chron. 35: 7)." — *Rawlinson.* During all these days the services of the temple choir were brought into requisition, — the singers of the famous clan of Asaph chanting, in relays, the psalms for the season, appointed centuries before by David, Asaph, and Jeduthun.

LESSONS FOR TO-DAY.

HOW THE BIBLE MAY BE LOST.

1. By neglecting it, — neglecting to read it daily. Neglecting family reading and prayers. Neglecting to read its stories to little children.

2. By disobeying it. Disobeying its precepts dulls the conscience, and the whole moral nature, so that it may be said, "Eyes have they, but they see not, ears have they but they hear not."

3. By being so absorbed in worldly things that while he heareth the word with his ears, "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13: 22).

4. By keeping the Word far from daily life, so that all its blessed truths are admired, but not geared on to right action. They are to the hearers "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (Ezek. 33: 32).

5. By making the Bible unattractive. I have heard a number of ministers read the Bible so poorly that people were not interested in it, listened carelessly, and liked it less than if it had been unread. Then the printing of the Revised Versions is so solid as to be unattractive and difficult to use.

6. By lessening its authority. It makes a vast difference in the power of the Bible, whether it is received as only the thoughts of men, or as a message from God.

7. By neglecting all the light that is shining upon it from many sources.

HOW TO FIND THE BIBLE.

1. Get acquainted with it. Read it. Study it. Know what is in it. One of the best things in the Sunday school, in the Epworth League and Christian Endeavor Movement is their emphasis on the daily reading of the Bible.

2. Practise its precepts. Only by doing God's will can one understand it. Use it as a guide book for daily life. Sometimes boys in school and college have little interest in their studies because they do not see any practical use in them. But as soon as they see how they guide to success, or are essential to their aims, they become full of enthusiasm.

3. Study the deeper meanings of the Bible, learn the best portions by heart. Read them over and over again. Macaulay said, "I have no pleasure in books which equals that of reading over for the hundredth time the great productions which I almost know by heart."

One of my brother ministers was near-sighted when he was a boy. He had never seen a distant prospect. He did not know that it existed till his father gave him a pair of near-

sighted spectacles, when a new world was revealed to him, one that had always existed. There are passages of Scripture that have come to me with a similar revelation. Every time I go over the Scriptures they come to me almost like a new Bible.

ILLUSTRATION. "Remember the lamp of Aladdin, which needed only to be rubbed to bring forth unseen powers to do the bidding of the possessor." — *Hugh Black.*

4. Bring to bear upon the Bible all the wonderful light that has been shed upon it from many sources. The literary study of the Bible, showing its various forms. The noticing in all your reading how literature is permeated with the Bible (see Rogers' chapter on "The blank Bible" in his *Eclipse of Faith*). The bringing to bear upon it the light from ancient monuments. The higher criticism has done at least this good to the people that it has taught us to see every prophecy and poem and epistle in its environment.

"Be thou my Star in Reason's night;
Be thou my Rock in Danger's fright;
Be thou my Guide 'mid passion's sway;
My Moon by night, my Sun by day."
— *Dean Milman to his Bible.*

5. Use the Bible to meet all the spiritual needs of the soul, as cold waters to the thirsty, food to the hungry, comfort to the sorrowing, an "open sesame" to all the treasures of life here and life beyond, "enough for each, enough for all, enough forevermore." Let it not be to you like a mass of idle musical instruments in the orchestra, but listen to the heavenly music concealed within them, a miracle of interpretation and inspiration.

6. Let the ministers train themselves to express in their public reading the meaning and power of the Bible as a message from God, and it will be a new book to many of their congregation.

7. May the publishers present the Bible in its most attractive forms. This is done for the Authorized Version. But the publishers of the Revised Versions print them in such solid forms that they are difficult to use, are repellant to the young and to most of the old; and they refuse to make them attractive. In response to inquiries, twenty of the largest libraries in the country report that the solid form of the Revisions hinders their attractiveness. And this is one reason why so few, comparatively, are sold. Oh, that they would help the great body of Bible users to find their Bibles!

8. Sunday school teachers can do very much to help their scholars to find their Bibles, by using all the many ways of making it attractive, pointing out the gems, the dramatic actions, the vivid stories, the wonderful eloquence, the new light. Never were there so many ways of doing this if teachers will only make it their study, and get all the helps they can from every source.

There are three books lately published, referred to in *The Teacher's Library* above:—

The Fascination of the Book.
The Magnetism of the Bible.
The Charm of the Old Book.

These will be to the readers like one portion of that remarkable ointment referred to in the *Arabian Nights*, "which if rubbed on the eye makes one see all the riches in the world, the gold hidden in the mines, the diamonds treasured in secret places."

LESSON VI. — August 6.

JEREMIAH TRIED AND ACQUITTED. — Jeremiah 26.

PRINT VS. 7-19. COMMIT VS. 13, 14.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* — PSA. 27: 1.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

That notable teacher Eugene C. Foster once began his lesson by asking his class of boys this question, "If each of you had the skill to paint or sketch a picture at will, what kind of picture would you paint which would illustrate the thought of" the lesson for the day? Slowly came different answers. Then he bade them listen while he pictured the scene.

The teacher of this lesson may well follow in the footsteps of this effective teacher, and having first listened to his scholars' efforts, present a vivid word-picture of one man trying to stem a spring torrent, and to save as many as possible of those who are being overwhelmed in its waters, while an idle crowd along the banks stand gazing without lifting a hand to save.

LEARN BY HEART.

Isa. 62: 1, 2; Matt. 11: 28–30.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Josiah was slain in battle B.C. 608, in the 31st year of his reign.

Jehoiakim his son began to reign the same year and reigned eleven years, B.C. 608 to 597.

Place. — Jerusalem and Judah.

Jeremiah began to prophesy B.C. 626, in the 13th year of Josiah, soon after Josiah began his first reforms; and he prophesied 40 years, to B.C. 586, the year that the Temple was destroyed and Jerusalem burned to the ground.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The Expositor's Bible, Jeremiah, 2 vols. One by Ball, the other chapters 21–52 by Bennett. *Jeremiah, A New and Critical Commentary*, by Prof. C. R. Brown of Newton (Baptist) Theological Seminary (1907). *Jeremiah, The Man and His Message* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1908). *Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Two Studies*, by Pres. W. G. Ballantine, Oberlin College. *Cambridge Bible, Bible Commentary*, Orelli's *Prophecy of Jeremiah*. Findlay's *The Books of the Prophets*, vol. 3, "Jeremiah and his group." George Adam Smith's *Jerusalem*, vol. 2, "Jeremiah's Jerusalem."

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The historical situation.
The prophet Jeremiah, — life and character.
Some of his methods, and why.
Why were the people so blind to their own good?
How do his arguments apply to our day?
Was Jeremiah's work a success or a failure?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Stemming the Downward Tide of Evil.

A PICTURE OF THE TIMES.

JEREMIAH.

I. HIS WARNING APPEAL TO JUDAH (vs. 1–7).

II. AN ATTEMPT TO PUT OUT A FIRE BY DESTROYING THE ALARM BELL (vs. 8–11).

III. THE PATRIOT PROPHET WILLING TO GIVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE THE PEOPLE (vs. 12–15).

IV. JEREMIAH ACQUITTED (vs. 16–19).

MODERN APPLICATIONS.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Lucy Larcom's *Poems*, "The weeping prophet." John Henry Newman's "Jeremiah." *Anthony Comstock, Fighter*, by C. G. Trumbull (Sunday School Times Company, 1910) gives the story of the man who with infinite courage and self-denial has fought the perverters of the young. Whittier's *Poems*, "The Reformer" is excellent for this lesson. Dante's series of immortal poems.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Margaret Foley's bas-relief of Jeremiah. *Jeremiah*, by Sargent,* Michelangelo (Sistine Chapel) Burne-Jones, Washington Allston (Yale Art Museum).

*Wilde's Bible Pictures.

We turn now from the career and character of a good boy who became a good king, to a bad young man who became a bad king; while the same prophet who aided the first for 18 years (Jer. 1: 2) tried now to stem the tide of evil favored by the other during the 11 years of his reign.

A Picture of the Times. The Overflowing Rapids of Evil.

THE RULERS. Thirteen years of labors to make his people serve and obey God have passed since Josiah entered upon his great reform. The Pharaoh Necho of Egypt marched along the seacoast of Palestine northward to meet the armies of Assyria. Foolishly and needlessly espousing the Assyrian cause, Josiah met him at Megiddo on the plain of Esdraelon, was defeated and killed. Professor Kent calls this disaster "unquestionably the most tragic event in Hebrew history." The reform party at once placed upon the throne

Josiah's third son, Jehoahaz, 23 years old, evidently because he resembled his father, but as soon as the victorious Necho returned from the Euphrates he reversed the arrangement, carried Jehoahaz in chains to Egypt after a reign of only three months, and left on the throne his elder brother, Eliakim, 25 years old, rightly judging him to be of a character more suited to his purpose. In token of vassalage Eliakim changed his name (in form, but not in significance) to Jehoiakim, "Jehovah raiseth up." He proved to be a tyrant, of whom Jeremiah speaks always in condemnation. His magnificent palace (Jer. 22: 13–15) built by forced labor, his murder of the prophet Uriah (Jer. 26: 20), and his persecution of Jeremiah show his character.

MORAL EVILS. All through the last years of Josiah's reforms a worldly party was growing. The temptations of idolatry with its appeals to all selfish and sensual pleasures were too great for many of the people, especially under such a king as Jehoiakim. We learn much from Jeremiah's warnings. A considerable part of the book relates to the times of this lesson.

Jeremiah draws a terrible picture of the condition of the people, of the prevalence of dishonesty, of open licentiousness, of murder, adultery, false swearing, treachery, and slander. "The land was full of idols, 'upon every high hill and under every green tree.' Immorality was rampant everywhere. Crimes of violence, deeds of oppression, and shameful vices abounded everywhere. The three great prophets of the period, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, vie with each other in the indignation and mournfulness of their delineations, — the root of all being in apostasy from God." — *S. G. Green.*

THE WHIRLWINDS OF RETRIBUTION seen coming from afar, bear the voice of God, enforcing his warnings. They were the lightning flashes and distant thunder of the storm that was sure to come unless the nation repented.

First. About the 12th year of Josiah, and the time of the first prophecies of Jeremiah, wild tribes of Scythians, from the plains of our southern Russia, "streamed through the passes of the Caucasus in countless hordes, ruthlessly destroying cities, fields, men, women, and children." — *Kent.*

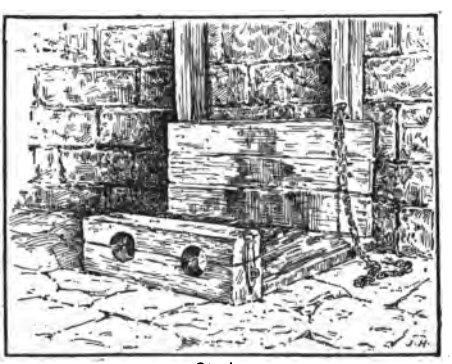
Second. The warnings came nearer when the great armies of Egypt and Assyria clashed at Megiddo, northwest of Jerusalem, at the time King Josiah was slain in battle in 608. But the people refused to turn to God.

Third. In two or three years the storm burst in full force upon Jerusalem.

"The forests fell before its force,
The rocks were shivered in its course."

Nineveh was destroyed in 606. The Babylonians conquered the Assyrians, and Nebuchadnezzar having defeated the Egyptian army besieged Jerusalem, and carried away captives in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 605. The people felt the sharp blows of the punishment, but still did not stop their downward course. God made "the way of transgressors hard" that he might save them. "As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33: 11).

JEREMIAH was a native of Anathoth, a little village 3½ miles northeast from Jerusalem. His father was Hilkiah, a priest (not the high priest who was Josiah's aid). He was of a retiring, exquisitely sensitive nature, and yet had a spiritual courage that triumphed over all weakness, and compelled his body to the most difficult and dangerous duties. He never failed. He was the butt of ridicule and scorn. He was put in the stocks. He was publicly whipped. He was misrepresented as an enemy. He was imprisoned several times. But he kept right on. He was like an elm tree, whose branches yield to every breeze, but which no storm, not even one that upheaves rocks from their bed, can cause to move one hair's breadth from its place in the ground. It is no wonder



Stocks.

7. So And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jĕr-e-mī'ah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

8. Now And it came to pass, when Jĕr-e-mī'ah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid took hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

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that he was sometimes discouraged, disappointed, almost despairing. He has been called "the weeping prophet" because he lived in such dark and evil times, but the only wonder is that he ever had such glorious gleams of hope, and that his prophetic eye ever pierced through the darkness of the night tempest and saw the silver lining beyond, and the rays of the coming dawn. He was a "meliorist" rather than an optimist. He saw the evil, but he was ever working to make it better. Like a doctor in a hospital he looked at disease from the curative standpoint.

Perhaps we will understand Jeremiah better if we realize the noble superiority of spiritual to physical courage. Some one reported to Napoleon that one of his officers turned pale when ordered to a dangerous duty. "That officer," replied Napoleon, "is one of the bravest in the whole army; he sees most clearly the danger, but will do his duty in spite of it." Two soldiers were charging up a hill with their regiment, in a desperate attempt to capture a battery. "When half way up, one of them turned to the other, and said, 'Why, you are as pale as a sheet. You look like a ghost. I believe you are afraid.' 'Yes, I am,' was the answer; 'and if you were half as much afraid as I am, you'd have run long ago.'"

SOME INTERESTING STORIES concerning Jeremiah's methods of doing his work. (If the teacher will look up these, and tell them in word-picture stories, he will give his scholars a new understanding of what a prophet is and does, as well as some practical teaching.) Like most of the prophets, he used object lessons. He stood at the gate of the temple, and proclaimed that unless the people repented, the temple should become as desolate as the ancient place of the tabernacle at Shiloh, not far away, and the valley of Hinnom, just below him on the south, should be named the valley of slaughter (chapter 7).

He took a girdle, and traveled hundreds of miles to the Euphrates, and hid it in a hole of the rock. A long time after he made the long journey again, and found it rotted into uselessness. A thousand miles' journey to prepare for a single sermon (chapter 13)!

He went down to the pottery factory and used that work as an illustration (chapter 18). He took a potter's bottle into the valley of Hinnom, assembled the elders, and breaking the vessel in their sight, declared that so Jerusalem should be destroyed on account of their sins (chapter 19).

He used two baskets of figs, one of very good ones, the other of very bad, as an object lesson (chapter 24).

He brought the Rechabites, who were driven into the city to escape from being plundered and murdered by the Babylonian army, before the people and had them openly refuse to drink the wine which he offered them, out of obedience to their father or ancestor (chapter 35).

Once more, we learn from Jer. 32: 6–15 that during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when the prophet was shut up in prison by King Zedekiah, Jeremiah bought a piece of land on which the Chaldean army were encamped, showing his perfect faith in the Word of God which he preached, and in the promise of a return. The deeds were written on a clay, as in Nineveh at that time. "Jeremiah's deed of purchase, moreover, was preserved in a jar, like the numerous clay deeds of the Egibi banking firm, which existed at Babylon from the age of Nebuchadnezzar to that of Xerxes. These jars served the purpose of our modern safes." — *Sayce's Fresh Light*, p. 105. The whole transaction was striking at such a time. It reminds us of the Roman, who, nearly four hundred years later, bought at its full price the land on which Hannibal's camp was pitched, outside the gates of Rome.

I. **Jeremiah's Appeal to Judah. A Word-Picture.** — Vs. 1–7. In the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign (B.C. 608) Jeremiah makes an earnest appeal to the leaders and the people, almost like an inaugural address, or the annual sermon preached in Boston on the inauguration of the governor of the state. The prophet stands in the court of the Temple. The people not only of the city but of the surrounding country are flocking into the court to join in the worship. The reform was halting "like an express train buried in an

9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shī'lōh, and this city shall be desolate without [an] inhabitant? And all the people were gathered [against / unto] Jĕr-e-mī'ah in the house of the LORD.

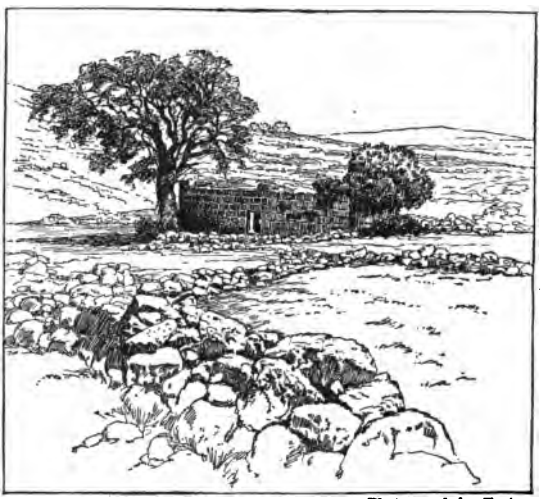
10. [When / And when] the princes of Jū'dah heard these things, [then] they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and [they] sat [down] [a] in the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S *house*.

11. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, [b] This man [is / is] worthy [to die; / of death;] [1] for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

[1] Jer. 38 : 4. *a* Or, *at the door*. *b* Heb., *The judgment of death* is *for this man*.

avalanche of soft snow." The kingdom was impoverished by the heavy fine of 100 talents of silver and one of gold ($220,000) which Necho of Egypt had imposed. It was a fitting time for an earnest appeal to repentance.

II. **An Attempt to Put Out the Fire in the Burning House, by Destroying the Alarm Bell.** — Vs. 8–11. **The priests and the prophets,** false prophets. These are distinguished from the secular rulers. **Thou shalt surely die,** the charge being that of Deut. 18: 20 that the prophet who spoke without God's commandment should be put to death. The priests did not believe that God would permit Jerusalem to be destroyed.



Photograph by Foster.

Ruins at Shiloh.

9. **This house shall be like Shiloh,** a town north of Bethel, once the abode of the Tabernacle and ark (Josh. 18: 1) as Jerusalem was of the Temple, but which fell into grievous idolatry (Psa. 78: 58–60), lost its house of worship, sank into insignificance and was probably destroyed by the Philistines.

All the people were gathered against Jeremiah led on by the arguments and influence of the priests.

THE SECULAR COURT ASSEMBLED. 10. **The princes of Judah,** the secular rulers and judges, **sat down,** took their place as a court to hear the case.

11. **Then spake the priests,** etc. They made their charge against Jeremiah before the court as they had before the people. They called him a traitor and **worthy to die.** So the chief priests in Christ's time declared him worthy of death as a traitor, because in order to save them he pointed out the depth of ruin to which these very priests were bringing the nation.

IT IS A STRANGE PICTURE. The house in which the people live is on fire. A friend is ringing the alarm bell to summon the fire engines. The inmates instead of helping to put out the fire, are smashing the bell with sledge hammers, and are trying to hang their friend with the bell rope.

HERE IS ANOTHER PICTURE. The nation like a boat on the rapids above the falls. Jeremiah the lookout on the bow. The king and the priests and false prophets setting every sail, and plying the oars with all their might, to urge the boat toward the cataract. Jeremiah shouting, Danger ahead. The people striving to throw him overboard as if he were destroying the boat.

12. Then spake Jĕr-e-mī'ah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13. Therefore now [1] amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will [2] repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14. As / But as for me, behold, [3] I am / am in your hand: do with me as seemeth / is good and meet unto you. / right in your eyes.

15. But / Only know ye for certain that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is / is not worthy to die; / of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

17. [4] Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

18. [5] Mi'cah / Mi-ca'iah the Mo'ras-thite / Mo'rash-tite prophesied in the days of Hĕz-e-kī'ah king of Jū'dah; and he spake to all the people of Jū'dah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; [6] Zi'ŏn shall be plowed like / as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

19. Did Hĕz-e-kī'ah king of Jū'dah and all Jū'dah put him at all to death? [7] did he not fear the LORD, and besought / intreat the favour of the LORD, and the LORD [8] repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? [9] Thus might / should we procure / commit great evil against our own souls.

[1] Jer. 7 : 3.	[4] Acts 5 : 34.	[7] 2 Chron. 32 : 26.
[2] Vs. 3, 19.	[5] Mic. 1 : 1.	[8] Ex. 32 : 14; 2 Sam. 24 : 16.
[3] Jer. 38 : 5.	[6] Mic. 3 : 12.	[9] Acts 5 : 39.

III. **The Patriot Prophet Willing to Die, if He Could Save His People.** — Vs. 12–15. **The LORD sent me.** The prophet was only the messenger, the message was from the Lord.

13. **Therefore now amend your ways.** That is the only possible way of escape. Every other hope is but a dream, a soap-bubble on which are painted most exquisite pictures, but which will burst into thin air, with a breath. This verse expresses the eternal laws of God in nature and in morals.

14. **As for me, behold, I am in your hand,** etc. You can kill me if you choose. But that won't save you or your nation.

EXAMPLES. Luther at Worms, Socrates before his accusers ("The Apology" of Plato). So John Knox of Scotland, Hugh Latimer of England.

A MODERN JEREMIAH is Anthony Comstock of New York, in his warfare against the dealers in vile, licentious literature. He has spent and is spending his life in saving the young. He has been threatened again and again, "I am going to break your neck," "I will put a bullet through you." He was mocked, hated, hooted, but he has gone on seizing the bad books, arresting the dealers, destroying the vile pictures. There has seldom been so brave a fight.

IV. **Jeremiah Acquitted by the Princes.** — Vs. 16–19. The princes saw the truth in Jeremiah's position. They realized that he had been the spokesman of God.

Then some of the elders, the leading people, instanced the case of the good king Hezekiah. He did not slay the prophet Micah, who boldly threatened the destruction of Jerusalem,— that its site would become a plowed field, and the temple a heap of ruins, unless they repented. Hezekiah did not kill Micah, but on the contrary he led his people to repentance, and the Lord averted the danger.

The verses following tell us of another prophet who fled from danger to Egypt, was

followed by the emissaries of Jehoiakim, brought back and executed. This story "is meant to show how serious Jeremiah's danger was, and perhaps to contrast Jeremiah's faith and courage with the timidity of Uriah who yet did not escape his enemies, but found a sad end." — *Orelli.*

MODERN APPLICATIONS.

1. Every child, like the young king of this lesson, is born into a world where many good influences and many bad ones are awaiting his choice of the life he will lead.

2. To every child comes the message from God urging him to do right at any cost, showing him that there is only one way to a life worth living, and pointing out the ruin that must come to every one who disobeys God.

3. There stands before him many an example of faith and courage and heroism in doing right and stemming the tide of evil.

ILLUSTRATION. It is the strong adverse wind that makes the kite fly high toward heaven, provided that it is held fast by its cord. Without the string the adverse winds would simply blow it to its fall and ruin. A heart fixed in God and duty, — held fast to them by a strong faith, — can rise to the highest usefulness, can overcome every temptation, and win the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful, enter into the joy of thy Lord." —See The Fable of the Kite in *Whateley's Annotations to Bacon*, p. 207.

4. While I was writing this lesson, I found myself surrounded by an unusual combination of circumstances. I was talking with one of the most earnest pastors and workers for boys. A young and very attractive boy was arrested for stealing. A judge from a distant city came to tell us his experience in saving boys caught in crime. We had just heard some sharp remarks condemning revivals. On my desk lay a recent pamphlet against revivals. Another pamphlet was at hand on a study of conversion. Another still on a study of fears. All centered around the problem of how to save the boys.

In discussing the problem we drew a simple diagram of child life like this.

Preparation.	Period of Decisions.	Training in the Christian Life.
Age 1——————12	12——18	Age 18——————

PREPARATION. The early years of the child are a period of preparation in all directions.

DECISION. Then comes the period when most people decide upon their future course for good or evil.

TRAINING. After this follows the period of training and development in the chosen life.

1. *Facts* show that most good men have made their right choice, most church members have been converted and united to the body of Christian workers at the middle period.

2. Facts show that most criminals decided on their career at this early period. Eighty per cent of those in prison are young or were sent to prison under twenty years of age.

This middle period decides the kind of men and women who shall come from our Sunday schools.

3. This decision period is one of mighty impulses, great temptations, the battlefield of all the principalities and powers of evil.

4. It is also the time when the soul is most open to all the influences for good. It is heaven's opportunity; the teacher's opportunity. It is the time when all good motives, all emotions and reasonings and influences for good must counteract and overbalance the influences for evil.

5. Therefore Revival work and Decision days, wisely used, are the most effective re-inforcements of the common powers that move to the choice of the better life. One of the strongest influences against choosing the right lies in the gang spirit, the power of a popular leader and of a band of associates. We need to counteract this downward power by the atmosphere, the motive power, of a number of people filled with the same spirit and moving in the same direction.

Doubtless the normal way of children in devotedly Christian families is to come so gradually into the Christian life, to make their decisions in small things, unconscious that these are really life-choices. But even these need the same revival and decision day influences to bring their hearts and life-choices into conscious realization. I have known people to live a long Christian life without entering into its fulness and activities and open profession, because there was no one time more than another when the impulse came to change.

6. Besides this there are a large number of young people who come to the decision age without any special religious training. These need the Revival meetings — and their strong presentation of motives to awaken their attention and bring them within the better influences. The judge insisted that with all the loving invitations there must be a definite and strong presentation of the ruin that will certainly follow a course of sin.

7. Note that what so many call a reaction, because the special meetings cease, is not a reaction, but the third period, that of Christian training, which needs a very different kind of meetings and teaching. Revival preaching would not be good continued all the time. Education filled with the spirit of the Gospel is the method now.

The usual opposition to revivals is unscientific and narrow. The teacher should give his attention to eliminating all imperfections from them, and devote himself wholly to applying every possible method and motive to the making of his boys Josiahs and not Jehoiakims.

LESSON VII. — August 13.

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE PROPHET'S BOOK.

Jeremiah 36.

PRINT vs. 20–32. COMMIT vs. 23, 24.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The word of our God shall stand forever.* — ISA. 40: 8.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

A good introduction to this lesson is that story in *Pilgrim's Progress*, where the Interpreter shows Christian a series of acted allegories.

In one of these Christian is led into a room where was a fire burning against a wall, and some one was pouring water in great profusion on the fire to put it out. But the more he tried to quench it, the higher and hotter the fire burned. Christian was astonished, but the Interpreter led him to the other side of the wall where he saw a man continually feeding the fire with oil.

In this lesson we are to see a king trying to destroy God's Word.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Jeremiah was prophet from B.C. 626, the 13th year of Josiah, till the destruction of Jerusalem, B.C. 586.

Jehoiakim reigned 11 years, B.C. 608–597.

Jeremiah's book was written B.C. 604.

The Fast day, ninth month of B.C. 603.

Jehoiakim burns the book soon after the fast.

Place. — Jerusalem. The Temple courts and the king's palace.

Nebuchadnezzar besieging Jerusalem, 1st year.

Daniel carried away captive.

Jeremiah under disfavor.

Jehoiakim an unwise king.

LEARN BY HEART.

Isa. 40: 8; 55: 10, 11.

ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The historical situation.
The various characters belonging to this time, such as Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, etc.
What Jeremiah was doing to save his country.
Jeremiah's roll.
Why Jehoiakim burnt Jeremiah's book.
Modern attempts to destroy the Word of God.
Why are they in vain?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: God's Word Stands Forever.

I. THE HISTORICAL SITUATION.
II. JEREMIAH HAS HIS PROPHECIES PUT INTO WRITING (vs. 1–8).
III. READING HIS BOOK TO A GREAT ASSEMBLY (vs. 9–18).
IV. THE KING BURNS UP JEREMIAH'S BOOK (vs. 19–26).
V. A NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION (vs. 27–32).
MODERN APPLICATIONS.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The commentaries and works on Jeremiah, as in the last lesson. Professor Phelps' "The Lost Bible" in *Old Testament Studies*. The story of Tyndale and his Bibles in Kenyon's *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, chap. XI. *A Century of Bibles*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Green's *History of England* on the effect of scattering the Bible among the people; and from the history of the persecutions under Diocletian, and in the times of the Reformation, when Bibles were burned publicly. Jacox's *Secular Annotations on Scripture Texts*, 2: 180, gives many examples from history. See *History of Ancient Rome* for an account of the Sibylline books and King Tarquin. "The Blank Bible," in Rogers' *Eclipse of Faith*.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Jeremiah's Roll Destroyed, by an unknown artist.* *Baruch Writing Jeremiah's Prophecy*, by Doré.*

* Wilde's Bible Pictures.

I. **The Historical Situation.** — Our lesson to-day begins in the same awful circumstances that made urgent Jeremiah's appeals in our last lesson that the people should repent and be saved.

1. Nebuchadnezzar had been besieging Jerusalem (B.C. 605–4) the third year of Jehoiakim, and while he did not destroy the city, for "he had no cause of ill-will against Jehoiakim, he made that king his vassal, and contented himself with carrying off a few prisoners (including Daniel and his companions) and part of the treasures of the Temple (Dan. 1: 1, 2)." — *Dean R. Payne Smith.*

2. Just at this time Nebuchadnezzar's father, the king of Babylon, died, and the son and heir left Jerusalem in great haste in his anxiety to secure the throne of the Babylonish Empire.

This was one beginning of the seventy years' captivity for Nebuchadnezzar never left the nation free after this. However the people began to think that Jeremiah's warnings would not come true.

3. In the latter part of B.C. 604, Jehoiakim's fourth year, Jeremiah was bidden by the Lord to adopt a new method, that of writing instead of speaking. This required several months.

4. During this interval of rest from Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiakim, in his fifth year (603 B.C.), took courage to revolt, but without the divine condition of repentance which alone could make it a success. He defied God as well as Babylon.

	B.C.	Year of Jehoiakim.	
	607	1st.	First year of his reign.
	606	2d.	Nineveh destroyed.
Daniel	605	3d.	Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem. Jehoiakim becomes his vassal. Nebuchadnezzar returns to Babylon. Daniel carried captive to Babylon.
Three years in Babylon.	604	4th.	Jeremiah's Prophecies written in a Book.
	603 Early	5th.	Jehoiakim revolts. Bands of Chaldeans menace the city.
	603 Ninth Month.		Fast day Proclaimed. Jeremiah's Book read.
Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. Late 603 or early 602.			Jehoiakim burns the Book. Book renewed with additions.

5. Then followed raids by bands of Chaldeans (Babylonians) and other marauders (2 Kings 24: 1–4) "sent against him by the Lord" as a punishment and a warning.

6. These dangers led the people to proclaim a fast.

7. On this day Baruch read Jeremiah's prophecies to the people who assembled from all parts of the country in the courts of the Temple.

II. Jeremiah Dictates His Prophecies to Baruch the Scribe. — Vs. 1–8. For 20 years Jeremiah had been trying, by oral teachings, to persuade the nation to repent and turn to God, but the people and their rulers had been deaf to his warnings. As a last resort, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the Lord commanded the prophet to write down the substance of his exhortations, and thus to focus them in one mighty blow upon the consciences of king and people (though some of his prophecies may have been written before, Jer. 22: 30; 30: 2). Moreover, for some reason Jeremiah was **shut up**, "restrained" (v. 5) from public utterance, being probably forbidden by the authorities to preach; so that for the time the written word was the only way by which Jeremiah could reach the ears of the people.

The chosen amanuensis was Baruch, the son of Neriah, a scribe. "To this day, in all Oriental lands, every civil and military official has a scribe who reads and writes everything for him." — *Tristram*. Baruch was of illustrious family, and it was a dangerous task for the young prince to assist the unpopular prophet. He demurred; "Woe is me!" he cried (Jer. 45: 1–5); but "the stern words, 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not,' braced the young nobleman to face the wrathful multitude."

An Amanuensis Taking Dictation from a Poet.

THE BOOK was not like ours, but was a roll of parchment, consisting of several skins sewed together, the edges cut even, and the whole rolled on wooden rods fastened at each end so that the parchment could be rolled from one to the other. The writing was arranged in columns, each like the page of a book.

It must have taken Baruch some months to have written down such prophecies as Jeremiah wished to have read, and which constituted a considerable part of the present book of Jeremiah.

That the words were dictated we are told in v. 18.

III. Reading the Book to a Great Assembly in the Temple Courts on a Fast-day. — Vs. 9–18. THE FAST-DAY. In the ninth month, December, of the fifth year of Jehoiakim, a public fast-day to the Lord was proclaimed to all the people of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, for them to gather in the Temple.

The revolt of Jehoiakim, the marauding bands of Chaldeans, the natural indignation of Nebuchadnezzar, — all awakened the people to their danger, and they began to fast and confess their sins, at least in outward form.

THE READING OF JEREMIAH'S PROPHECIES TO THE PEOPLE. Jeremiah sent Baruch to the temple to read the book to the assembled crowds. It was a wintry day in December. Baruch went up into the chamber of a friendly noble, over a new gateway opening both ways into the inner and outer courts. "There, from the window or balcony of the chamber, or from the platform or pillar on which the kings had stood on solemn occasions, he recited the long alternation of lament and invective to the vast congregation." — *Stanley*.

Reading in this way was almost the only way by which the people could become acquainted with the Word of God. Few could read. And copies of the law cost a small fortune.

THE POWER OF READING THE BIBLE, when read as a new book. In the middle ages the Bible "was forbidden to the common people, and scarcely known even to the priests and preachers of the church. Luther rediscovers it. The printing-press gives him a larger audience than any voice could reach, and all Europe is thrown into a

Scribe's Inkstand and a Reed Pen.

20. And they went in to the king into the court; but they [had] laid up the roll in the chamber of E-lĭsh'a-ma the scribe; and [they] told all the words in the ears of the king.

21. So the king sent Je-hū'dī to fetch the roll: and he took it out of [E-lish'a-ma the scribe's chamber, the chamber of E-lish'a-ma the scribe.] And Je-hū'dī read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

22. Now the king sat in [1] the [winterhouse, winter house] in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* [on, in] the [hearth, brasier] burning before him.

[1] Amos 3 : 15.

ferment by the Bible translated into the vernacular. Wherever that open Bible goes, there goes the impulse of a new and divine life. The secret power of the Reformation lies in the appeal of Luther from the traditions of the church to the Word of God. Two centuries more go by, or nearly two. The Scriptures which Wickliffe and Tyndale have made the heritage of every Englishman have again been lost to English life. Then arises the Methodist Reformation, which brings an open Bible to an illiterate people, gathers its truths directly from the sacred pages, and presents them directly to human souls; and the great Methodist revival, the product of a rediscovered Bible, proves again the power of the Word." — *Lyman Abbott.*

If the people now did not reform, it was because they refused to believe and obey the Word. The best thing had been done for them.

THE BOOK READ TO THE PRINCES AND NOBLES. *The same day, in Gemariah's chamber over the temple gate.* The son of Gemariah went out and heard what Baruch read to the people. It made such an impression upon him that he went down from his father's chamber over the gate to the room of one of the secretaries of state, Elishama, where the leaders were assembled in council, and told them the solemn and terrible truths he had heard. They immediately sent for Baruch. He came with the roll (or book) in his hand. "They said, Sit down now and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears."

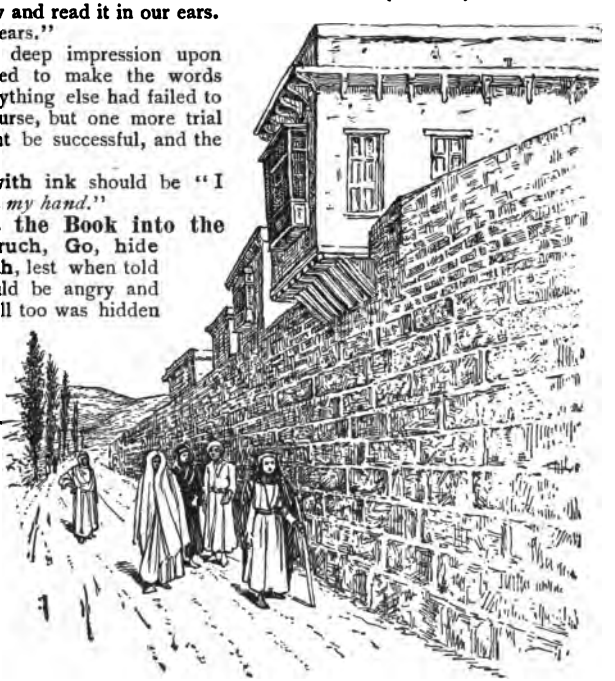
The message made a deep impression upon them, and they determined to make the words known to the king. Everything else had failed to move him to the right course, but one more trial must be made, and it might be successful, and the nation be saved.

18. I wrote them with ink should be "I (Baruch) wrote them *with my hand.*"

IV. **The King Puts the Book into the Fire.** — Vs. 19–26. **Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah,** lest when told of the roll the king should be angry and seek to kill them. The roll too was hidden in a place of safety. It required no little courage to go to the king with their message, and they provided against his possible anger.

21. So the king sent Jehudi. One of his officers. **To fetch the roll.** That Jehoiakim might learn its contents at first hand and not from hearsay. We are to read the Bible itself, and not merely books about the Bible.

22. The king sat in the winterhouse.



House on a Wall Near a City Gate.

23. And it came to pass, *that* when Je-hū'dī had read three or four [a] leaves, he that *the king* cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that *was on* the hearth, brasier, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was on* the brasier.

24. Yet they were not afraid, nor [1] rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

25. Nevertheless El'na-than and Del-a-ī'ah and Gĕm-a-rī'ah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

26. But the king commanded Je-rah'me-el the son of Ham'me-lech, king's son, and Sĕr-a-ī'ah the son of Az'rĭ-el, and Shĕl-e-mī'ah the son of Ab'de-el, to take Bā'ruch the scribe and Jĕr-e-mī'ah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

[1] 2 Kings 22: 11; Isa. 36: 22; 37: 1. [a] Or, *columns*.

"Such language is easily understood by an Oriental. In common parlance the lower departments are simply *el beit* — the house; the upper is the *alliyeh*, which is the summer house." **In the ninth month.** "The ninth month corresponds nearly to our December. It was therefore the cold and rainy season of the year." — *Lange*. **There was a fire on the hearth burning.** Rather in "the brazier." They have no chimneys, and "hearths are unknown in the East. Braziers containing charcoal are placed in a depression in the middle of a room for purposes of warming." — *Cambridge Bible*.

23. **Had read three or four leaves**, columns. It seems probable that after Jehudi had read three or four columns, the king snatched the roll from his hands, and, taking the penknife used for sharpening the scribe's pens, cut up the roll himself, **and cast it into the fire.** Some think that only the first portion was read, when *all* the roll was consumed in the fire. But Professor Bennett says that the Hebrew implies that at the end of every three or four columns the king put out his hand for the roll, cut away the portion read, threw it on the fire, and handed the remainder back to Jehudi, repeating the process. So *Professor Brown*.

24. **Yet they were not afraid** of destroying the roll, yet, the very fact of destroying it, shows that they were afraid lest the prophecy be fulfilled. This verse expresses the writer's astonishment at the depth of depravity, the intense hardness of heart, the mental blindness and dulness of the king and his attendants, as if they imagined that burning the roll would destroy the Word of God.

> "There is no strange handwriting on the wall,
> Through all the midnight hum no threatening call,
> Nor on the marble floor the stealthy fall
> Of fatal footsteps. All is safe. — Thou fool,
> The avenging deities are shod with wool!" — *W. Allen Butler*.

26. **The king commanded . . . to take**, arrest, **Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah. But the LORD hid them**, by means of the princes, v. 19, or by some unknown providence and guidance; or, as usual, by the use of means inspired by God.

Shutting the eyes does not ward off the lightning's stroke. Fools, that think that by wringing the neck of the crowing cock they can prevent the coming of the morning.

ILLUSTRATION. When Luther's books were publicly burned by order of the Papal Nuncio, the remark made to the Emperor Charles' ministers was, "Do you imagine that Luther's doctrines are found only in those books that you are throwing into the fire? They are written where you cannot reach them, in the hearts of the nation." — *D'Aubigne*, Bk. 6, chap. 11.

THE INCHCAPE ROCK. The unpardonable sin from destroying the power within us which makes salvation possible, is illustrated by Southey's poem, "The Inchcape Rock." The "holy abbot of Aberbrothock" had placed a bell over this rock, in such a way that it was rung by the motion of the waves.

> "When the rock was hid by the tempest's swell,
> The mariners heard the warning bell."

One day Ralph the Rover, in sport, "cut the warning bell from its float," and "sailed away, and scoured the seas for many a day." Returning, richly laden, he finds himself near the Scottish shore in a fog and the swell of a gale.

> "Canst hear, says one, the breakers' roar? Now, where we are I cannot tell,
> For yonder methinks, should be the shore. But I wish we could hear the Inchcape bell."

27. Then the word of the LORD came to Jĕr-e-mī'ah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Bā'ruch wrote at the mouth of Jĕr-e-mī'ah, saying,

28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Je-hoi'a-kim the king of Jū'dah hath burned.

29. And (thou shalt say to / concerning) Je-hoi'a-kim king of Jū'dah, (thou shalt say,) Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Băb'y-lon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

30. Therefore thus saith the LORD (of / concerning) Je-hoi'a-kim king of Jū'dah; [1] He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be [2] cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

31. And I will [a] punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Jū'dah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

32. Then took Jĕr-e-mī'ah another roll, and gave it to Bā'ruch the scribe, the son of Ne-rī'ah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jĕr-e-mī'ah all the words of the book which Je-hoi'a-kim king of Jū'dah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many [b] like words.

[1] Jer. 22 : 30.
[2] Jer. 22 : 19.
[a] Heb., *visit upon*, Jer. 23 : 34.
[b] Heb., *as they*.

But they hear no sound, and soon are wrecked upon the very rock from which they had destroyed the warning bell.

V. **A New and Enlarged Edition.** — Vs. 27–32. **Then the word of the LORD came.** The book was destroyed, but its contents and its truths lived.

28. Take thee . . . another roll, and write in it. Jeremiah knew what he had said before, and God gave him further revelations. Professor Brown thinks that Baruch's second roll contained the first seventeen chapters of our Jeremiah.

29. Thou shalt say to Jehoiakim that the prophecies should certainly come true.

31. And I will punish him and his seed. He was slain. His son was carried in chains to Babylon. Because while they heard the warnings, **they hearkened not.** This implies that they might have been saved from the threatened evil, if they had repented, as in the case of Nineveh under Jonah's preaching. Otherwise there would have been no use in warning them. The warnings were for the purpose of keeping them from the ruin before them; to make the way of transgressors so hard that no one would continue to walk therein.

MODERN APPLICATIONS.

ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY THE BIBLE.

1. From without, as when men are forbidden to read it, and everything is done to prevent its circulation. These efforts were more in times past, and yet it is but a short time since travelers coming into Rome were not allowed to take their Bibles within the walls. But all such efforts were failures.

ILLUSTRATION. WYCLIFFE'S BIBLE. The frontispiece of Wycliffe's Bible represents the fire of true Christianity against which its enemies, Satan, the pope, and infidelity, are blowing with all their might, trying to put it out; but the more they put themselves out of breath, the more brightly the fire burns.

ILLUSTRATION. THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE OF TYNDALE'S BIBLE. Tyndale, while in the University of Cambridge devoted his life to the translation of the Bible, saying to an opponent, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scripture than thou doest." His project being opposed in England, he went to the free cities of Hamburg, Cologne and Worms, and in 1525 issued his translation of the New Testament. Copies poured into England. The Bishop of London was so

opposed that he collected . . . all the copies he could find and burned them at St. Paul's Cross in London. But in spite of all his efforts copies continued to pour into England as fast as the bishop could destroy them.

But the most interesting parallel to Jehoiakim's act is the fact that the Bishop collected money to buy up the whole edition of Tyndale. A merchant, Mr. Packington, friendly to Mr. Tyndale, agreed to go over and buy the books. "William," he said, "I know thou art a poor man, and hast a heap of New Testaments and books by thee, and I have now gotten thee a merchant which with ready money will buy all thou hast." "Who is this merchant?" "The Bishop of London." "Oh, that is because he will burn them." "Yes, he will." Tyndale was glad, because now he could get out of debt; "the world will cry out against the burning of God's Word;" and the money enabled him to get out a new edition, with errors corrected, and much better than the one that was burnt. See Kenyon's *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*.

ILLUSTRATION. INGERSOLL'S PROPHECY, twenty-six years ago, "In ten years the Bible will not be read." The fact is that vastly more Bibles are issued every year than when that prophecy was uttered, and in more languages. More than 15,000,000 Bibles are issued every year in more than 470 different languages and in hundreds of styles at prices from 25 cents to $50. More copies of the Bible are sold annually than of the "100 best sellers" combined.

2. Those destroy the Bible for some people, who for any reason give the impression that it is not true, diminish its authority, and fill the minds of the young with doubts.

And yet every attack has made it read more, and caused it to shine in purer light.

3. Those who disobey and neglect the Bible, refuse to let it be a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path, who ignore its teachings, and refuse its truths, — these destroy the Bible for themselves. But the laws of God move on just the same.

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again;
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error vanquished, writhes in pain,
And dies amid her worshipers."

LESSON VIII. — August 20.

JEREMIAH CAST INTO PRISON. — Jeremiah 37.

PRINT vs. 4–21. COMMIT v. 15.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*** — MATT. 5: 11.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Too Much "Don't." — "When a boy of fifteen was asked why he disliked his Sunday school teacher and declared that he would not go to Sunday school any more if he could not go into some other class, he said in reply: —

"'Because it is "don't," "don't," "*don't!*" the whole time with him. We are never told to *do* anything, but every Sunday there is a new string of "don'ts" and I am sick and tired of them all!'

"This sort of negative teaching is apt to make any boy 'sick and tired' of his Sunday school class. There is no call to service, no note of inspiration in a 'don't.' And I believe that it is true that a continual call or a command for a boy not to do a thing somehow or other creates in him a desire to do that very thing.

"To tell a boy to do a thing implies that you think he can do it. An appeal to the positive will always count for more than an appeal to the negative in a boy." — *Paul Creighton* in *The Sunday School Journal*.

This is true. But occasionally a boy so acts that there must be an unusual emphasis on the "Don't," as in the teaching of Jeremiah. And yet the prophet insistently urged the people to "Do," whenever they gave him the least opportunity.

It is sad for any person when he has gone so far wrong that "Don't" must be the most frequent word used.

Count up in the text of this lesson and the two previous ones how many "Do's" and how many "Don'ts" Jeremiah used.

LEARN BY HEART.

Matt. 5: 10–12; Rev. 7: 13–15.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time of This Lesson was B.C. 588–586, 18 years after our last lesson during the last siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, from the 9th to the 11th year of Zedekiah's reign.

Place. — Jerusalem, surrounded by the besieging armies of the Chaldeans, and suffering from famine and pestilence (Jer. 38: 2).

Jeremiah had prophesied nearly 40 years (since 626) and was a prematurely old man.

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah, reigning 11 years.

Nebuchadnezzar, 18th and 19th year of his reign.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Zedekiah and his reign.
Jeremiah, and why he was so bitterly opposed. His heroism.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR, and his siege. His object in it.
What is the evil of persecution?
How are the persecuted blessed?
What is their reward?

PARALLEL SCRIPTURES.

2 Kings 25: 1–7.
2 Chron. 36: 11–17.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Martyr Patriot.

I. THE HISTORICAL SITUATION.
II. JEREMIAH WARNS THE PEOPLE AGAINST FALSE HOPES (vs. 4–10).
III. JEREMIAH THE MARTYR (vs. 11–21).
THE LESSON IN DAILY LIFE.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The same commentaries and books as in Lesson VI. *Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a Character Study*, by W. G. Ballantine (Revell). Prof. Austin Phelps' "The Prophet of the Broken Heart" in his *Studies in the Old Testament.*

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Luther's Hymn "The Son of God goes forth to war." Madame Guyon's prison hymn, "A little bird I am"; the Latin prayer composed by Mary Queen of Scots in prison, "O domine Deus! speravi in Te!" Whittier's "Barclay of Ury," and "The Prisoners of Naples"; Lowell's "Prison of Cervantes"; Wordsworth's "Persecution of the Scottish Covenanters"; Byron's "Sonnet on Chillon."

THE LESSON IN ART.

Jeremiah Imprisoned, by an unknown artist.*

* Wilde's Bible Pictures.

I. **The Historical Situation.** — (1) Jehoiakim reigned six years after he had burned the roll of Jeremiah's prophecies, which, like the fabled phœnix, rose anew and fresh from the ashes. He died in 597.

THE FIRST BLOW of the threatened doom of Judah had fallen during the fourth year of his reign (605–4), the first tolling of the bell of judgment which should have summoned the very dead in sin to awake. But they gave no heed.

(2) Jehoiachin, his son, ascended the throne (597), a bad, weak boy, utterly unfit to cope with the situation. His reign lasted only three months. "Upon Jehoiachin, as upon Louis XVI. of France, descended the full force of the divine vengeance incurred by previous generations. He was scarcely on the throne when the Chaldean forces, which had been ravaging Judea, were joined by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and closed around Jerusalem, and Jehoiachin surrendered at discretion. The arm of Babylon raised to strike his father fell on him, and fulfilled the prophecy against Jehoiakim (Jer. 36: 30), 'He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David.'" — *Hastings.* Jehoiachin was kept a prisoner in Babylon for 37 years and was then released (2 Kings 25: 27–30). Ezekiel was carried away with him (Ezek. 1: 1, 2), and the great-grandfather of Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin (Esth. 2: 5, 6).

A Greek Cameo of Nebuchadnezzar, with inscription, "To Nerobach, his lord Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon has made for his life."— Sayce.

THIS WAS THE SECOND BLOW OF DIVINE JUDGMENT, the beginning of the second captivity, when

4. Now Jĕr-e-mī'ah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

5. Then [1] And Phā'raōh's army was come forth out of E'gypt: [2] and when the Chăl-dē'ans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed brake up from Jerusalem.

[1] 2 Kings 24: 7. [2] V. 11; Jer. 34: 21.

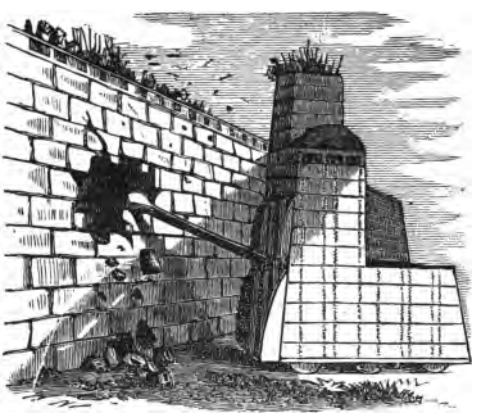
10,000 people were carried captive to Babylon. Among them were the king's wives and officers, and 7,000 that were strong and apt for war, and a thousand craftsmen; and a large part of the 5,400 (Ezra 1: 7–11) vessels of gold and silver from the Temple and palaces (2 Kings 24: 12–16).

"The policy of Nebuchadnezzar was to remove out of the way all those who might be able to organize a revolt when he and his army had departed. Such men it would have been dangerous to leave behind." — *Cambridge Bible.*

It would seem as if all this would have been sufficient to prevail on the people to repent and be saved.

(3) Zedekiah, the brother of Jehoiakim, was placed upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, "a shadow king over a desperate band of men." B.C. 596.

During the first nine years of his reign (596–588) the nation, instead of embracing the opportunity of repentance, plunged more deeply into folly. "The dregs of the people, left behind in Jerusalem, laid this flattering unction to their souls: 'We have been spared by Jehovah, therefore we are righteous in his sight.' The leading men had been carried away. We can imagine the scramble for offices with high-sounding titles. The exiles had been obliged to dispose of their property on such terms as they could make. The purchasers or usurpers felt that they had made great bargains. They were now the gentry and landed proprietors of the nation. That they showed the pride that goes before destruction is evident." — *H. P. Smith.*



From an Old Print.

Ancient Battering Ram.

PROPHETS. During all these years Jeremiah was uttering his warnings in Jerusalem; and Ezekiel a captive on the river Chebar was sending his messages from Babylonia to Palestine (Ezek. 1: 1–3; 3: 1).

THE THIRD AND LAST STROKE OF JUDGMENT came in the ninth year of Zedekiah when probably in hope of help from Egypt he rebelled against Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar returned with his armies and began the final siege of Jerusalem (our next lesson).

II. **Jeremiah Warns the People against False Hopes.** — Vs. 3–10. THE FINAL SIEGE had begun by Nebuchadnezzar, in the ninth year of Zedekiah. Contrary to the advice of Jeremiah Zedekiah rebelled against the Babylonian empire (2 Chron. 36: 13). He was probably encouraged to revolt by the expectation of aid from Egypt. But all such efforts to escape from Babylon's power were in vain so long as he refused to accept the only possible condition, — repentance, — of having God's help, for "he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel," 2 Chron. 36: 13.

Hence Nebuchadnezzar came upon Jerusalem with all his armies. He surrounded the city. He built forts against it round about it. Famine and pestilence stalked through the city, so that "Men sought death, and could not find it; and desired to die, and death fled from them. Alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought."

A SPASM OF FORMAL REPENTANCE. In this distress the king sent to Jeremiah saying (v. 3) **Pray now unto the LORD our God for us,** to deliver them from their danger.

6. Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jĕr-e-mī'ah, saying,
7. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Jū'dah, [1] that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Phā'raōh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to E'gypt into their own land.
8. [2] And the Chăl-dē'ans shall come again, and fight against this city, and they shall take it, and burn it with fire.
9. Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not [a] yourselves, saying, The Chăl-dē'ans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.
10. [3] For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chăl-dē'ans that fight against you, and there remained but [b] wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

[1] Jer. 21: 2.
[2] Jer. 34: 22.
[3] Jer. 21: 4, 5.
[a] Heb., *souls.*
[b] Heb., *thrust through.*

He should have prayed for a repentant heart, and the prayer would have availed. From Jeremiah 34, we learn that in the terror inspired by the approach of the Chaldeans, the panic-stricken populace of the capital bethought them of a law of their God, which they had long set at nought; and the king and his princes and the entire people bound themselves by a solemn covenant in the temple, to release, according to the law, all slaves of Israelitish birth, who had served six years and upwards, whom they had continued to keep in unlawful and oppressive servitude.

But this was a mere formal penitence, and not real contrition for their sin. And as soon as Nebuchadnezzar's armies withdrew from Jerusalem to meet the advancing Egyptian army (vs. 5, 11), they broke their covenant, and compelled those they had made free to return to their unlawful service again.

ILLUSTRATION. Said a little girl, who had just been reading a newspaper account of an explosion, "Mamma, don't you think that people who work in powder-mills ought to be good?" It was this *powder-mill piety* that was shown by Zedekiah and his nobles.

6. Then came the word of the LORD, through Jeremiah, in answer to the king's request that the prophet should inquire of the Lord for him, that Nebuchadnezzar might "go up from us." The answer was that their hopes had been vain. The help they expected from Pharaoh was utterly false; till they repented God himself was against them, and he would turn back the Chaldean armies upon the city. "I will assemble them into the midst of this city. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence." Jer. 21: 4–6.

He continued "I set before you the way of life, and the way of death" (Jer. 21: 8). But they had chosen the way of death. Their false, heartless form of repentance set that fact in clearer light. There was no possible way of escape except through a change of heart and life. **For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.** — V. 10.

ILLUSTRATION. GYGES' RING. Plato in his *Republic* uses the story of Gyges' Ring to illustrate the test whether one's profession of righteousness is sincere or not. Plato's story is that a certain Lydian shepherd (about B.C. 600) found in some strange way a gold ring. Coming with this ring on his finger into the meeting of the shepherds making their monthly report of their flocks to the king, "he happened to turn the stone of the ring towards himself into the inner part of his hand; and when this was done he became invisible to those who sat beside him, and they talked of him as absent; and astonished at this he again handled his ring, turned the stone outward, and on turning it, became visible." He made trial of this several times, and found that it always had the same power. Using this power of invisibility, he entered the palace, slew the king, and took possession of the kingdom. Such a ring would be a test of the reality of professed righteousness. The rich men under Zedekiah utterly failed in this test. They were good only when threatened danger hung over them like the sword of Damocles. But as soon as the danger seemed to pass away their goodness went with it.

11. [1]And it came to pass· that when the army of the Chăl-dē'ans was [a] broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Phā'raōh's army,

12. [Then then] Jĕr-e-mī'ah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Bĕn'ja-min, to [separate himself receive his portion] [b] thence there, in the midst of the people.

13. And when he was in the gate of Bĕn'ja-min, a captain of the ward [was was] there, whose name [was was] I-rī'jah, the son of Shĕl-e-mī'ah, the son of Hăn-a-nī'ah; and he [laid took hold on] Jĕr-e-mī'ah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chăl-dē'ans.

14. Then said Jĕr-e-mī'ah, [It is It is] [c] false; I fall not away to the Chăl-dē'ans: [But but] he hearkened not to him: so I-rī'jah [laid took hold on] Jĕr-e-mī'ah, and brought him to the princes.

15. [Wherefore And] the princes were wroth with Jĕr-e-mī'ah, and smote him, [2]and put him in prison in the house of Jŏn'a-than the scribe; for they had made that the prison.

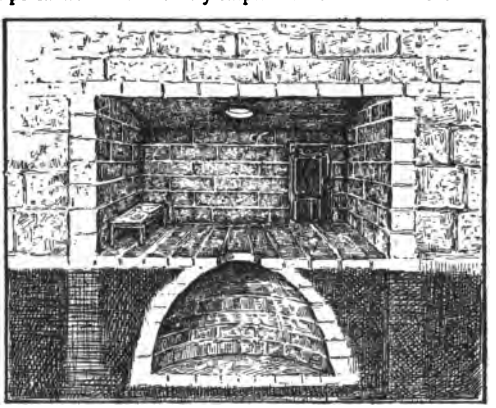
16. When Jĕr-e-mī'ah was [entered come] into [3]the dungeon· [house,] and into the [cabins, cells,] and Jĕr-e-mī'ah had remained there many days;

[1] V. 5.
[2] Jer. 38 : 26.
[3] Jer. 38 : 6.
[a] Heb., *made to ascend.*
[b] Or, *from thence.*
[c] Heb., *falsehood*, or, *a lie.*

A truly good man will be good even when no one would know his wrongs if he committed them. The man that was only seemingly and outwardly good would commit crimes if he could do it without discovery.

III. **Jeremiah the Martyr.** — Vs. 11–21. FALSELY ACCUSED. During this brief respite while Nebuchadnezzar left Jerusalem free while he fought the Egyptians (12) **Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin.** His home was at Anathoth in Benjamin, 3 or 4 miles north of the city. **To separate himself.** "To receive his portion there," R.V. It was "apparently to secure his share of the tithes and produce of the Levitical glebe of the village, due to him as one of its priests." "Knowing that the Chaldeans would return, it was imperative that he should obtain the means of subsistence to take back into the city, so soon to be beleaguered afresh."—*Geikie.* Others think it was to secure himself in the possession of an inheritance. **In the midst of the people.** There was a natural rush to get out of the city after so long a confinement. Some would seek for food; some would visit their possessions; some would flee to the hills for safety, some desert to the camp of the enemy. Jeremiah went with the others.

13. **When he was in the gate of Benjamin,** the north gate of the city, that by which anyone would go to the country of Benjamin which adjoined Jerusalem. **Captain of the ward,** or guard, "a sentinel." — *Professor Brown.* **Irijah.** The naming of the captain with his ancestry implies that he was one of the princes. **Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.** You are trying to desert to the enemy. His well known prophecies of the destruction of the city, and advice that the people should yield the city to the Chaldeans, gave color to this accusation.



Inner Prison.

14. **Then said Jeremiah: "False! A lie!" I fall not away to the Chaldeans.** He was arrested by the guard, and brought to the princes, the officials of the government.

15. **Were wroth with Jeremiah.** He had compared them to rotten figs (Jeremiah 24). He was the strongest and most resolute opponent of their war policy. But for him they would have had it all their own way.

17. Then (then) Zĕd-e-kī'ah the king sent, and (fetched) him: out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there (any) word from the LORD? And Jĕr-e-mī'ah said, There is: for, said he, thou (He said also, Thou) shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Băb'y-lon.

18. Moreover Jĕr-e-mī'ah said unto king Zĕd-e-kī'ah, What (Wherein) have I offended (sinned) against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

19. Where (are now / now are) your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Băb'y-lon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

20. Therefore (And now) hear, now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be [a] accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jŏn'a-than the scribe, lest I die there.

21. Then Zĕd-e-kī'ah the king commanded, that (and) they (should commit / committed) Jĕr-e-mī'ah [1] into the court of the prison (guard), and that they (should give / gave) him daily a piece (loaf) of bread out of the bakers' street, [2] until all the bread in the city (were / was) spent. Thus Jĕr-e-mī'ah remained in the court of the prison (guard).

[1] Jer. 32: 2; 38: 13, 28. [2] Jer. 38: 9; 52: 6. [a] Heb., *fall.*

16. Into the dungeon. "Unto the well-house." — *Brown.* Under the prison building. Jerusalem was honey-combed with subterranean cisterns, vaulted or arched overhead, and **cabins**, "vaults, the subterranean, arched spaces of a cistern, containing water." — *Professor Brown.* How bad this dungeon was we may learn from the next chapter where we are told that in another dungeon "they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire." And when they at last drew him up they took "old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah," who put them under his arms, and was drawn up by the cords.

In this dungeon **Jeremiah had remained . . . many days.**

17. At last **Zedekiah the king** secretly **took him out** in order to learn: **Is there any word from the Lord?** Jeremiah replied: **There is.** The word was: **Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.**

At Jeremiah's request, and to escape from the guilt of being the murderer of the prophet, Zedekiah had him cared for in the court of the guard, and supplied him with daily bread.

THE LESSON IN DAILY LIFE.

1. We are not all called to be martyrs, but all are called to have the martyr spirit, to be ready to suffer for the Lord and the coming of his kingdom. And all have opportunity to work out this spirit in the little things and the great things of daily life. There are many martyrs not known to history, but whose names are recorded in heaven.

"These, though their names appear not on the scroll
Of martyrologists, laid down their life —
Not less a martyrdom in Jesus' eyes —
For his dear brethren's sake, watching the couch
Of loathsome sickness, or of slow decay,
Or visiting the captive in his cell,
Or struggling with a burden not their own
Until their very life-strings wore away —
These, too, are martyrs, brother."
— *Bickersteth.*

2. PERSECUTION IS SIN AND FOLLY. Persecution is the very opposite of Christianity. Christianity bears burdens, persecution loads them on. Christianity "believeth all things," persecution suspects all things. Christianity loves, and persecution hates. Yet persecutors are often well-meaning men. Jeremiah's enemies thought they were patriots and he was a traitor. It is easy even for a Christian to persuade himself that he is right and his opponents are so terribly wrong that they must be suppressed by force instead of argument, by worldly weapons instead of truth. Opposed in the wrong spirit, error flourishes with the advertising it gets; and when the truth is persecuted, the old saying is always proved true, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Persecution of God's children is like bruising spices, which smell the sweeter; like pruning vines, which bear more grapes and larger; like beating and wringing wet linen, which shines the fairer and whiter.

3. All the suffering of even good men, when it comes from their imperfections, or from doing good things in bad ways, is not suffering persecution and does not reap its reward.

Jeremiah was in a dungeon for doing his duty and trying to save his country from ruin. Within two years King Zedekiah was in a dungeon, blind and hopeless, because he betrayed his country, and had not the character nor the courage to obey the Word of God. The two prisons, equally horrible, were as different as the mists of north-east drizzle from the mists glorified by the setting sun.

4. BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, as those are sure to be who try to live up to the Beatitudes, and promulgate them in an evil world. Blessed are they who are such positive factors in making the world good that they arouse the hatred and opposition of bad men. Standing beside St. John as he gazed into heaven, we hear one of the elders saying, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" And he said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

FIRST. There is a reward in themselves, when they overcome evil with good. Persecution gives an opportunity for victory, for growing stronger, and braver, and better, for making out of opposition a stairway to heavenly character, and all that goodness of which crowns and stars, and harps, and all heavenly joys are the symbols and expression.

SECOND. The great reward is in the success of the good cause for which they suffer. They call the attention of the world to the wrongs they strive to overcome. They declare to the whole world the value of the religion of Jesus, the greatness of his love, the preciousness of his truth. They are insensibly moulding the character of God's people. They comfort those now suffering for righteousness' sake with the assurance that they are not suffering in vain. Jeremiah in prison is still preaching to the world, still beckoning God's people on to faithfulness and courage; for his prison has now become the temple where he serves God day and night, where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne feedeth him, and leadeth him to the fountains of living waters (Rev. 7: 15–17).

MISSIONARY ILLUSTRATIONS are abundant in modern times. Witness the fourfold growth of the church in Madagascar as the result of the cruel persecutions of 1849 and the two decades following, when Christians were flung over "the Rock of Hurling," a precipice of 150 feet, were burned to death, stoned, killed by boiling water or by poison. Witness the growth of the church in China after the fearful Boxer massacres of 1900. The Armenian massacres in Turkey cost the lives of many thousands of Christians, but their heroism planted a respect for Christianity even in the minds of Turks and Kurds. And the heroism of the missionaries, so like that of the Apostles of old, has elevated the whole missionary work throughout the world.

JEREMIAH IN PRISON saw visions of success. Three times he tells of the return of the Jews after 70 years of exile.

BARCLAY OF URY. Whittier's poem calls our attention to Scotland's noble martyr of 1648–1690, endowed with great talents and a reformer's courage, and persecuted because he embraced Quaker principles. He was hooted and harried by the mob as he walked through the streets of Aberdeen clothed in sackcloth and ashes. He was thrust into prison. But he said he found more satisfaction, as well as honor, in being thus insulted for his religious principles, than when in former days the magistrates of Aberdeen went out to meet him as he came to the city, and welcomed him to public entertainment.

"'Happier I, with loss of all,
Hunted, outlawed, held in thrall,
With few friends to greet me,
Than when reeve and squire were seen,
Riding out from Aberdeen,
With bared heads to meet me.'

"So the Laird of Ury said,
Turning slow his horse's head
Towards the Tolbooth prison,
Where, through iron grates, he heard
Poor disciples of the Word
Preach of Christ arisen!

"Happy he whose inward ear
Angel comfortings can hear,
O'er the rabble's laughter;
And while Hatred's fagots burn,
Glimpses through the smoke discern
Of the good hereafter.

"Knowing this, that never yet
Share of Truth was vainly set
In the world's wide fallow;
After hands shall sow the seed,
After hands from hill and mead
Reap the harvests yellow.

"Thus, with somewhat of the seer,
Must the moral pioneer
From the Future borrow;
Clothe the waste with dreams of grain,
And on midnight's sky of rain,
Paint the golden morrow."

LESSON IX. — August 27.

JUDAH CARRIED CAPTIVE TO BABYLON.

Jeremiah 39.

PRINT vs. 1-10. COMMIT vs. 9, 10. READ 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Be sure your sin will find you out.* — NUM. 32: 23.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

A few days ago a mother was telling me how troubled she had been about her boy in college whom she had reason to think had just begun to gamble. Knowing him as she did she thought it unwise to charge him with it, but she must save him. She prayed with all her soul. Not long after this the boy told her of a classmate who had gone all to pieces from gambling at the game of poker. They talked it all over, but not a word was said directly to him.

The boy was saved. He saw the vision of the end of such a course.

To-day's lesson is a mirror, an object lesson, a warning, that may save some scholar from ruin.

LEARN BY HEART.

PROV. 1: 24-26; Matt. 23: 37.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B.C. 586, July. The 11th year of Zedekiah, the 9th day of the 4th month.

Place. — Jerusalem. Also the surrounding country. Nebuchadnezzar was at Riblah in Hamath in northern Syria. The captives were taken to Babylonia.

The Route of the captives was not directly east through the desert, but northward through Syria to the Euphrates, thence southeast down the river to Babylonia.

Prophets. — Jeremiah in Judah and Egypt. Ezekiel on the river Chebar, "The grand canal," southeast of the city of Babylon. Daniel in Babylon.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The three records, Jeremiah, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles.
The political causes of Jerusalem's ruin.
The moral causes.
The strangely fulfilled prophecy concerning Zedekiah.
The main teaching of this lesson.
Lessons for our own nation.

PARALLEL SCRIPTURE ACCOUNTS OF THE SIEGE.

Jer. 39: 1-10 is nearly the same as 2 Kings 25: 1-20.

Jeremiah 52 gives a parallel account, 2 Chron. 36: 17-20, a condensed account.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Way of Transgressors Is Hard.

I. THE SIEGE AND FINAL ASSAULT (vs. 1, 2).

II. THE CITY AND TEMPLE IN RUINS (vs. 2, 3, 8).

III. KING ZEDEKIAH AND HIS FATE (vs. 4-7).

IV. THE CAPTIVES CARRIED TO BABYLON (vs. 9, 10).

V. THE TREASURES OF CITY AND TEMPLE TAKEN TO BABYLON.

LESSONS FOR OUR OWN TIME.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Commentaries on Jeremiah, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Joseph Cook's *Conscience* "The laughter of the soul at itself." Plutarch on *The Delay of the Divine Justice*, edited by Prof. Andrew P. Peabody. (Little, Brown & Co., Boston.) Shakespeare's *King John*, Act IV., Scene 1. A good illustration of the journey of the exiles may be found in *Siberia and the Exile System*, by George Kennan (2 vols., $2.50 per vol., Century Company). On blinding prisoners, see

Xenophon's *Anabasis*, I., 9, § 13. Compare *Herodotus*, VII., 18; Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, Vol. I., p. 367. Zedekiah might have spoken words such as Shakespeare puts in Clarence's mouth in *Richard III.* *Judea Capta*, by Charlotte Elizabeth gives the story of a similar capture of Jerusalem 656 years later.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Lamentation of Jeremiah, by von Schnorr, and by an unknown artist.* *Destruction of Jerusalem*, by Hayez,* Kaulbach, and an unknown artist.* *Weeping Over the Ruined City*, by unknown artist.* *War in Ancient Times*, Nast.*

1. In the [1] ninth year of Zĕd-e-kī'ah king of Jū'dah, in the tenth month, came Nĕb'u-chăd-nĕz'zar king of Băb'y-lon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

[1] 2 Kings 25 : 1-4 ; Jer. 52 : 4-7.

I. **The Siege and Final Assault.** — Vs. 1, 2. The first verse shows us that the siege of Jerusalem lasted a year and a half, from December 588 to July 586.

1. **Came Nebuchadnezzar.** Nebuchadnezzar was a great general in 605, in his first siege of Jerusalem, and became sole emperor B.C. 604. He made Babylon glorious during his reign of 43 years. He was in his 18th year when he began this siege.

And all his army, even "all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people" (Jer. 34: 1), not only the fierce and cruel Chaldeans, but also warriors from the surrounding nations, enemies of the Jews, and tributaries of Babylon, the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites (2 Kings 24: 2). **Besieged it.** "Surrounded it with their armies to prevent all provisions from entering, and to starve it to submission, if they could not break down its walls. They built around the city movable wooden towers, sometimes provided with battering-rams, which the besiegers advanced against the walls, thus bringing their fighting-men on a level with their antagonists. Such towers are seen in the Assyrian sculptures (Layard's *Monuments of Nineveh*, First Series, pl. 19)." — *Cook.* "The thud of the battering-rams shook the walls day and night; archers made the defence increasingly hard, by constant showers of arrows from the high wooden forts; catapults of all sizes hurled stones into the town with a force as deadly as that of modern bullets, and darts tipped with fire kindled the roofs of houses; mines were dug under the walls, and attempts at escalade by ladders were renewed at every favorable opportunity." — *Geikie.*

Archer, Figure with Shield, and Young Man with Quivers (Assyrian).

THE BRAVE DEFENCE. "Jerusalem was at this time a city of 20,000 inhabitants. Against the huge engines of Asiatic warfare the besieged citizens constructed counter-engines; and (such was the Jewish tradition) the struggle was worthy of the occasion — a combat or duel, not only of courage, but of skill and intelligence, between Babylon and Jerusalem." — *Stanley.* Houses were demolished, that new walls might be built of their materials, inside each spot weakened by the battering-rams (Jer. 33: 4, R.V.). "The ram-

2. *And* in the eleventh year of Zĕd-e-kī'ah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, (the city was broken up. a breach was made in the city.)

3. [1] And (that) all the princes of the king of Băb'y-lon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even (even) Ner'gal-sha-rē'zer, Săm'gar-nē'bo, Sar-sē'chim, Răb'-sa-rĭs, Ner'gal-sha-rē'zer, Răb-măg, with all the residue (rest) of the princes of the king of Băb'y-lon.

4. [2] And it came to pass· that (that) when Zĕd-e-kī'ah the king of Jū'dah saw them, and all the men of war· saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain. Ar'a-bah.

5. But the Chal-de'ans' army (army of the Chal-de'ans) pursued after them, and [3] overtook Zĕd-e-kī'ah in the plains of Jĕr'ĭ-chō: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Neb-u-chad-nez'zar (Neb-u-chad-rez'zar) king of Băb'y-lon to [4] Rĭb'lah in the land of Hā'math, where (and) he [a] gave judgment (judgement) upon him.

6. Then the king of Băb'y-lon slew the sons of Zĕd-e-kī'ah in Rĭb'lah before his eyes: also the king of Băb'y-lon slew all the nobles of Jū'dah.

7. Moreover [5] he put out Zĕd-e-kī'ah's eyes, and bound him with chains, (in fetters,) to carry him to Băb'y-lon.

8. [6] And the Chăl-dē'ans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

[1] Jer. 38 : 17.
[2] 2 Kings 25 : 4; Jer. 52 : 7.
[3] Jer. 32 : 4; 38 : 18, 23.
[4] 2 Kings 23 : 33.
[5] Ezek. 12 : 13; Jer. 32 : 4.
[6] 2 Kings 25 : 9; Jer. 38 : 18.
[a] Heb., *spake with him judgments*, Jer. 4 : 12.

parts were vigorously defended by archers and slingers, equal in bravery to those of the Chaldeans. The rams were caught, when possible, by doubled chains or ropes to weaken their blows, or, if it might be, to capsize them. Lighted torches and firebrands were thrown on their roofs and on those of the catapults, to set them on fire. The gates of the town were zealously defended against the efforts of the enemy to burst them open or to burn them." — *Geikie.*

THE FAMINE. At last there was no food for the people, and famine prevailed (2 Kings 25: 3). For the horrors of the siege see Lamentations 4.

"They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets. The young children ask bread *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people."

"The houses were full of the sick and wounded; bloody fights between contending parties, as to surrendering or holding out, crowded the streets with fresh horrors; the roar of the siege night and day filled the air." — *Geikie.*

II. **The City and the Temple in Ruins.** — Vs. 2, 3, 8; Jer. 52: 12–14; 2 Kings 25: 8–10; 2 Chron. 36: 17–19. *The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem!* — Lam. 4: 12.

2. **The city was broken up.** R.V., "A breach was made in the city," at midnight. (Josephus. See Ezek. 12: 2–12, Am. R.)

3. **The princes of the king of Babylon came in.** The generals and high officials. Nebuchadnezzar himself was at Riblah in Hamath. See on v. 5.

And sat in the middle gate. "The entrance doubtless had two gates, an exterior and interior (see 2 Sam. 18: 24) and by the latter the princes were gathered, doubtless to pass judgment on individuals, and to make new ordinances." — *Professor Brown.* "To decide as to what should be done with the prisoners and property taken."

Only *four* princes are named, not six. The third is **Sarse-chim** the **Rab-saris**, a high Assyrian title, by some translated "the chief of the eunuchs." The last is **Nergal-sharezer** the **Rab-mag**; *i.e.* "the chief magician" or "sorcerer."

With all the residue of the princes, of lower estate.

8. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

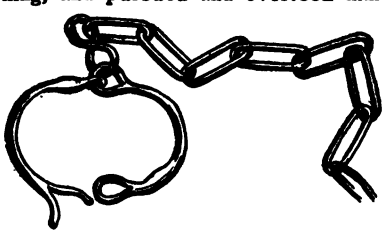
The king of the Chaldees slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand (2 Chron. 36: 17).

"And they burnt the house of God" (2 Chron. 36: 19).

III. **King Zedekiah and His Fate.** — Vs. 4–7. THE EFFORT TO ESCAPE. **Zedekiah the king . . . and all the men of war . . . fled.** As the invaders were entering from the north, the king naturally fled toward the south; and the path which he chose was that which wound down the Tyropœon valley, **betwixt the two walls** of Moriah on his left, and Zion on his right. This path came out in **the king's garden**, which was laid out near Siloam in the broad space formed by the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys, at the south-east corner of the city.

And he went out of this garden, turning to the north-east, by **the way of the plain**, the way that led to the plain over Olivet to Bethany and on toward Jericho, in order to cross the Jordan and escape. **The plain** is literally "the Arabah," the great, deep depression from the Sea of Galilee down the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, to the eastern branch of the Red Sea.

5. **The Chaldeans' army** who surrounded the city, soon discovered the flight of the king, and **pursued** and **overtook** him "and all his army were scattered from him."



Old Iron Fetters.

They brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah. Riblah was an ancient city, situated upon the Orontes, between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, 70 miles north of Damascus, and about 200 miles east of north from Jerusalem. This was on the regular route to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was encamped here as a convenient center while he was conducting military operations against Tyre, as well as Jerusalem.

HIS PUNISHMENT. **Gave judgment upon him,** *i.e.* brought him to trial as a common criminal, not as a king, because he had repudiated his most solemn oath of allegiance, and been a secret traitor to the king who had placed him on the throne (2 Kings 24: 20; 2 Chron. 36: 13). There is a frequent reference to this as a heinous crime in Ezekiel (17: 15–19).

(1) **Slew the sons of Zedekiah . . . before his eyes,** so that the last things his eyes ever saw, a perpetual memory, were the death agonies of his sons, and of his friends, **all the nobles of Judah.**

(2) 7. **Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes.** He would have no more opportunities of conspiring against his rulers.

> "O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
> Irrevocably dark! total eclipse, without one hope of day."
> — *Milton, Samson Agonistes.*

What a loss! How little compensation could Zedekiah have, with such memories filling his past, compared with Milton in his blindness: —

> "And when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
> The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains — alas, too few!"
> — *Wordsworth.*

> "Visions come and go,
> Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng;
> From angel lips I seem to hear the flow
> Of soft and holy song."
> — *Miss E. Lloyd, on Milton's Blindness.*

Bound him with chains. Margin, "with two brazen chains or fetters," as in 2 Kings 25: 7. **To carry him to Babylon.** Which was done; and he was kept in prison there till the day of his death (52: 11). "The Assyrians' captives are usually represented as bound hand and foot, — the two hands secured by one chain, the two feet by another (Layard's, *Nineveh and Babylon*, vol. II., p. 376)." — *Cook.* "There is in the British Museum a pair of bronze fetters, brought from Nineveh, which weigh eight pounds eleven ounces, and measure sixteen and a half inches in length. These probably resemble the fetters put on Zedekiah. The rings which enclose the ankles are thinner than the other part, so that they could be hammered smaller after the feet had passed through them." — *Freeman.* According to Jewish tradition, Zedekiah was, like other slaves, forced to work in a mill at Babylon.

9. [1] Then Něb'u-zar-ā'dan the [a] captain of the guard carried away captive into Băb'y-lon the remnant (residue) of the people that remained in the city, and those (the deserters) also, that fell away, that fell to him, with (and) the rest (residue) of the people that remained.

10. But Něb'u-zar-ā'dan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Jū'dah, and gave them vineyards and fields [b] at the same time.

[1] 2 Kings 25: 11; Jer. 52: 15. *a* Heb., *chief of the executioners.* *b* Heb., *in that day.*

"With Repentance, his only companion, he lay,
And a dismal companion was he."

REMARKABLE PROPHECIES FULFILLED. God spoke by the tongue of Ezekiel one of the most mysterious and most curious predictions in the entire Bible. He declared that King Zedekiah should be led into Babylon a captive, should there live and there die, and yet he should never see the city. So singular is this record that we must read the verses just as he wrote them out (Ezek. 12: 10–13). Now put with this a parallel passage. Jeremiah was thrown into prison by his monarch. While there under bonds, he in like manner predicted the downfall of Jerusalem; and he said that Zedekiah should speak with Nebuchadnezzar mouth to mouth, and see his eyes. Find the exact words (Jer. 32: 3–5).

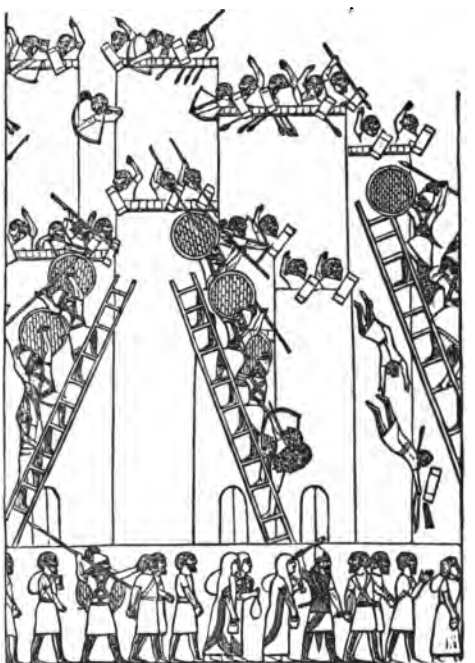
The history we have just considered shows how these prophecies were fulfilled.

Zedekiah saw Nebuchadnezzar and spoke to him, at Riblah.

His eyes were put out at Riblah.

He was carried captive to Babylon, lived and died there in prison.

But he never saw the city.



After Layard.

Taking a City by Assault with Scaling Ladders.
In the panel at the foot the captives are being led away.

IV. **The Captives Carried to Babylon.** — Vs. 9, 10; Jer. 52: 15, 16, 28–30. **Carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people . . . those that fell away,** deserters, all the leading people who would be able to make any political trouble, or incite to rebellion.

10. **Left of the poor of the people,** who were supposed to be unable to revolt. These had now some compensation for their poverty. They had been oppressed by the rich and great, as Jeremiah tells us; and now their oppressors are ruined captives, and the poor received the vineyards and fields, as a part compensation for the wages and opportunities of which the rich had deprived them.

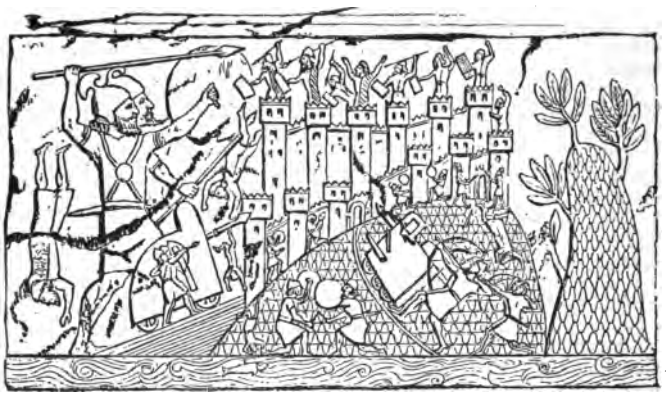
NUMBERS OF THE CAPTIVES. Jer. 52: 28–30; 2 Kings 24: 14.

Lesson VII. (1) In his 1st year, B.C. 604-5, Jehoiakim's 4th year, Daniel and a few others.
Lesson VIII. (2) In his 8th year, B.C. 598, Jehoiakim's 10th year, 10,000 persons, 2 Kings 24: 14.
(3) In his 17th year, B.C. 587, Zedekiah's 10th year, 3,023 from the surrounding country.
Lesson IX. (4) In his 18th year, B.C. 586, Zedekiah's 11th year, 832 from the surrounding country.
(5) In his 23d year, B.C. 582, by the captain of the guard, 745 from the surrounding country.

Total 14,600 persons in three campaigns, the numbers under (3), (4), (5) all belong-

ing to the third campaign which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem.* "The number of persons carried away captive after the destruction of the city, 832, seems small, but we must remember that the population had been greatly reduced, by the previous deportations, by desertion, by sword and famine, by flight to other countries (Jer. 40: 7–12). And the city was not large; doubtless it never numbered 50,000, and in the time of Zedekiah contained not a quarter of this." — *Professor Brown.*

THE HARDSHIPS OF THE CAPTIVES. "In the bas-reliefs representing the capture of Lachish by Sennacherib, the prisoners were represented, some pegged down to the ground, to be flayed alive, and others having their eyes put out. In one of the sculptures at Khorsabad, Sargon represents himself in person holding a prisoner by a thong attached to a ring passed through his under lip. The victim kneels before him, while with a spear he pierces his eyes. Others are held chained, and, with hooks through their lips, are held awaiting their turn. In other cases the king slays the prisoners with his own spear. In another, an executioner flays a captive fastened to the wall. It was especially in Persia that the cruel practice of blinding prisoners prevailed, and it is mentioned by most of the Greek historians. In Turkey it was formerly the custom for a sultan, on his accession, either to slaughter or blind his half brothers, that he might have no rivals, or no dangerous ones, near his throne. In modern Persia the shahs have invariably, even up to the present century, put out the eyes of all their brothers who did not escape in time to distant provinces."— *Canon Tristram* in *Sunday School Times.*



From Assyrian Monuments.

Sennacherib Besieging Lachish.

The deportation of captives from Russia to Siberia, many thousands each year, gives the best modern example of such a journey as the Israelites must have made over the 700 miles from Jerusalem to Babylon. The horrors of such a journey are portrayed by George Kennan in his *Siberia and the Exile System.*

V. **Carrying Away the Treasures of City, Palace and Temple.** — In 2 Kings 25, and Jeremiah 52, we have lists of the various articles of gold, silver and bronze which were carried to Babylon. Some idea of the number may be gained from the fact that Cyrus restored to the exiles on their return 5,400 vessels of gold and silver.

LESSONS FOR OUR OWN TIME.

SUBJECT: THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS IS HARD. 1. The way of Transgressors is the choice of those who walk in it. God, good men, angels, laws, all are against any man's walking therein.

The way of transgressors is hard indeed, because of the awful punishment at the end of the way. Like the human victim selected for sacrifice by the Aztecs, who for weeks was feasted and honored, but who knew all the time what the end was to be. See Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico.* Like the malefactors described by Plutarch who acted in the theater in embroidered tunics, crowned and dancing, but conscious all the time that at the end of the play they would be goaded and scourged, and perish in the flames streaming from their gay apparel. See Plutarch's *Delay of Divine Punishment.* So the sinful know that the

*NOTE. In Jer. 52: 28, nearly all scholars think that the "seventh" year is a misprint for 17th and that these numbers all belong to the final campaign of Nebuchadnezzar. For we are told in 2 Kings 24: 14 that 10,000 were carried away in his second campaign in 598. The 3,023 were from the surrounding country, and sent to Babylon before the siege was ended.

end of their way is death, and the consciousness of this throws a shadow over all the life before.

"The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

Compare Rev. Mr. Hank's picture-description of the Black Valley R.R. from the Crystal River country to the demon-haunted pit of the Black Valley. See his book, *The Crystal River*.

The ruin from sin is an awful tragedy; but whenever sin goes unpunished the sin increases. Murders have greatly increased in this country, where the majority of murderers go unpunished. The *Youth's Companion* states:

"In some states where the death penalty was abolished, so great an increase in murder followed that capital punishment was restored.

"France has passed through a similar experience. Although the law was not repealed, the president always commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment. A little more than two years ago a parliamentary commission recommended the repeal of the capital punishment law. But the number of murders was growing so rapidly that the national sentiment changed, and the proposed law was not passed. President Fallières has recognized the present public opinion, and acts in conformity with it."

The law-breaking by so many people in this country has become so great by the graft and corruption of so many who wish to get rich quick, that the whole country is becoming aroused and demanding that rich law-breakers, as well as poor ones, should be imprisoned and not merely fined. And one of the most hopeful signs of the times is the number of these who are finding the way of transgressors hard. There is a better way, but these men refuse to walk in it.

3. The way of transgressors is very hard, not only on account of the punishment at the end, but because so many barriers must be broken down and restraining influences must be overcome in order to go on in sin, — the love of God, the conscience and moral nature, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, the sacrifice of Christ, the sense of honor, God's goodness, early training, the influences of religion.

ILLUSTRATION. As the angel stood in the path of Balaam while going on in his stubborn determination to disobey, so God puts warnings, and entreaties, and mercies, and the love of Christ, and trials and punishments, in the path of the sinner, as his good angels, to withstand his downward course, and to cry out to him, "Go back, go back!"

There is nothing God wants so much as to save men from the way of transgressors, into the kingdom of heaven. This is not merely New Testament teaching, but Old Testament teaching. Witness Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Listen to Hosea's message from God, expressions of God's loving-kindness and unwearied yearning over the people, like the father in the parable of the prodigal son. The father exclaims in infinite pity, "How can I give thee up, Ephraim?" "How shall I make thee as Admah?" a desolate ruin. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

Christ brings new helps, new motives, new powers of the Spirit, new reasons for love, but his is the same cry over the old city, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not!"

ILLUSTRATION. While Mr. Moody was at Baltimore, in the winter of 1878–79, he preached every Sabbath at the penitentiary. There are about 1,000 inmates. It is the custom to give to each one who obeys the rules, and has no black marks for a month, a check, which is equivalent to one day off from his sentence. There were usually 40 or 50 out of the thousand, who would gain their check by good behavior. After Mr. Moody had preached there a few weeks, only *one out of the thousand failed* of gaining their check. The morality had increased from 40 to 999. So it is ever with the religion of Jesus Christ.

This teaching as to punishment, this method of saving the wrong doer is the one we are just beginning to use for our criminals. Our prisons and our punishments have long forgotten the principles God has used from the beginning. They are just beginning to have "Reformatories that Reform." They need to be multiplied everywhere, and we should destroy root and branch the prisons that are schools of crime instead of virtue. One thing that even "reformatories that reform" need most of all, is the full power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They will never succeed fully till they become inspirers of new hearts.

LESSON X. — September 3.

REVIEW OF KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Depart from evil and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.***— PSA. 34: 14.

The principal characters and the leading events should be impressed on the memory of all.

And this should be done in such a way as, —

1. To show what were the marked characteristics of each person.
2. To show the relation of each person to the course of the history.
3. To show the relation of each event to the movement of the history.
4. The bearing of each person and event on the progress of the world toward the divine Goal, the coming of the Kingdom of God.
5. The principles which each one sets forth clearly to shed light upon the path of life and progress to-day.

REHOBOAM. 1st king, B.C. 982 — 1st year of the kingdom.
Bad Advice. Folly. Threw away five-sixths of his kingdom.
Event. Division of the kingdom.

ASA. 3d king, B.C. 962 — 21st year of kingdom.
Reformer. Prosperous kingdom.
Event. Great revival of religion.

JEHOSHAPHAT. 4th king, B.C. 921 — 62d year of kingdom.
Strong Character. General, successful, religious.
Events. Intellectual, moral and religious progress. Suffered from bad alliance with Jezebel. Moabite stone.

SEVERAL BAD RULERS. Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah. Introduction of Baal worship. Temple desecrated. Decline in morals and prosperity.

JOASH. 8th king, B.C. 886 — 97th year of kingdom.
The Bad King. Good so long as under good advisers.
Events. Temple restored, and its worship. Black Obelisk.

AHAZ. 12th king, B.C. 738 — 245th year of the kingdom.
Events. Assyrians come in contact with Palestine. Dial of Ahaz. Isaiah prophesying.

HEZEKIAH. 13th king, B.C. 723 — 260th year of the kingdom.
Good, religious, active reformer. Taylor Cylinder.
Events. Fall of Samaria — end of Israel. Destruction of Sennacherib — wide extended revival. Life prolonged fifteen years in answer to prayer.

MANASSEH. 14th king, B.C. 694 — 289th year of kingdom.
The bad king — suffered captivity — changed life.
Events. Assyrian domination — partial reformation.

JOSIAH. 16th king, B.C. 638 — 345th year of kingdom.
Youthful consecration, cleansing the Temple, widespread revival.
Events. Finding the Book of the Law. Bible study, Jeremiah.

JEHOIAKIM. 18th king, B.C. 607 — 376th year of the kingdom.
Weak, wicked, defiant of God.
Events. Burns the book of Jeremiah. Beginning of the captivity. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem. Daniel carried to Babylon. *The second captivity* began at the close of his reign when many captives were carried to Babylon, with his son King Jehoiachin.

ZEDEKIAH. 20th and last king, B.C. 596–387.
Weak and false to his agreements.
Events. Jeremiah imprisoned. At the close of his reign Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the end of the kingdom of Judah came in B.C. 586, after 397 years of existence.

There were three deportations by Nebuchadnezzar:
1. The 4th year of Jehoiakim, Daniel, etc.
2. 10,000 at the close of his reign.
3. 4,600 in the three deportations of the final campaign.

GEOGRAPHY. Study the map for the three kingdoms involved. Egypt, Palestine, Assyria, the great routes of travel, and the situation of Palestine between the two world powers; Jerusalem being off one side from the routes between the other two. This is the key to the situation.

MODERN APPLICATIONS.

NOTE 1, in this history, what were the things that urged or attracted the nation to the downward course.

2. What was the essential element that would have enabled the nation to move upward to true success and character. No nation and no individual can attain the highest good from life without supreme consecration to God, a lofty ideal, and a holy enthusiasm in the service of God and man.

3. Trace in the history what God did for the people to inspire and move them to the upward course, as prophets, written scriptures, revivals, prosperity, rewards of obedience.

4. What obstacles did God put in the way of the downward course of the nation, and puts them in the way of sinners to-day; as warnings, adversity, losses, the fate of others.

"The rise and fall" of Israel is a picture of what is going on continually among individuals. The whole course of the history is a magic mirror in which sinners may see themselves; a panorama of their own lives, their bright hopes and possibilities.

"PAST REDEMPTION POINT. On the bank of the Niagara River, on a piece of land extending into the river, where the rapids begin to swell and swirl most desperately preparatory to their final plunge, is a sign board which bears a most startling legend, 'Past Redemption Point,' because it is believed in the neighborhood that nothing can pass that point and escape destruction. One day a vessel was being towed across the river when the hawser broke, and she drifted helplessly down stream, in full view of horrified thousands on the shore. Just as she reached Past Redemption Point a breeze sprung up, all sails were set, and she escaped. The wind of God's mercy blew upon the Hebrew ship of state, but no sails were set, and she went over the cataract."

LESSON XI. — September 10.

DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS. — Daniel 1 : 8–20.

READ Daniel 1. COMMIT vs. 8, 9.

A TEMPERANCE LESSON.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.*** —ROM. 14: 21.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The book of Daniel stands in the midst of a great battle of the critics. Is it historical, or is it a book composed of stories written many years after the times represented in the book, for the purpose of giving comfort and strength to the Jews in some of the most disastrous times in their history?

The battle is still going on, with great scholars on each side; and "it is too early to sing songs of triumph for either party."

There is no time in the half-hour of teaching this lesson, for the ordinary teacher to enter into the discussion. If anyone wishes to make a study of the question, he can consult the books named in *The Teacher's Library* where both points of view are given.

A true story is always more effective than fiction, except where a parable is radiant with eternal truth. But the teaching of Daniel is the same whatever view we take of its origin. And it is the work of the teacher of children to bring to them the divine honey in whichever garden the flowers grow. Farrar says: "There is scarcely a single Book in the Old Testament which can be more richly profitable."

LEARN BY HEART.

Prov. 20: 1; 31: 4, 5.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B.C. 605, 4. The third year of King Jehoiakim (Lesson VII.). The accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, when Daniel was carried captive to Babylon. The next year is called his first year.

Period. — Three years, B.C. 605,4–603–2, on Nebuchadnezzar's return to Babylon after defeating the armies of Egypt.

Place. — Babylon on the Euphrates. Before his captivity Daniel lived in Jerusalem.

Place in the History. — 2 Kings 24: 1–6; 2 Chron. 36: 5–8.

Prophets. — Jeremiah and Habakkuk were prophesying at Jerusalem when Daniel was carried away, and Ezekiel was his contemporary in Babylonia, but not in the city of Babylon. He was on the river Chebar, southeast of the city.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The time and circumstances of this lesson.
The Book of Daniel.
Why Daniel refused the king's food.
The advantages of the simple life.
The effect, on Daniel's character and career, of his self-control and Temperance.
What does it cost us to "dare to be a Daniel"?
What is the reason that God permits young and old to be exposed to so many temptations?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Conquering the Dragon of Intemperance.

I. THE FIRST CAPTIVES TO BABYLON (vs. 1–7).

II. THE YOUNG MEN'S FAITH, COURAGE, AND SELF-CONTROL (vs. 5, 8, 9).

III. THE TESTING BY FACTS (vs. 10–14).

IV. THE RESULTS OF THE TEST (vs. 15–20).

OVERCOMING THE DRAGON OF INTEMPERANCE.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Professor Wright's *Daniel and His Prophecies* (Little, Brown & Co., 1906). Professor Driver in *Cambridge Bible* (1900). Prof. Joseph D. Wilson's *Did Daniel Write Daniel* (C. C. Cook, New York, 1905). Professor Pusey's *Daniel the Prophet.* Farrar in the *Expositor's Bible. Daniel in the Critic's Den*, by Sir Robert Anderson. *Daniel*, by Dr. Bevan. Sayce's *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 497–538. *Daniel*, by Wm. M. Taylor, D.D., by Matheson in his *Representative Men of the Bible. Daniel, His Life and Times*, by Rev. A. M. Hunter.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

The hymn, "Dare to be a Daniel." Cowper's strong passage on temperance in "The Task," Book IV. The fine chapter, "Shakespeare and Temperance," in Burgess's *The Bible in Shakespeare.*

THE LESSON IN ART.

Daniel, by Sargent* (in Boston Library); by Michelangelo (Sistine Chapel); Riviere, Burne-Jones.

I. The First Captives of Nebuchadnezzar's Great Deportation of Jews to Babylon.— Vs. 1–7. At the time of this lesson the two great world powers were in deadly conflict. The Egyptian army under Necho had marched toward Babylon as far as Carchemish on the Euphrates.

On the other hand Nabopolassar with the assistance of the Scythians had conquered the Assyrians, and destroyed Nineveh the capital, B.C. 606. The Babylonians marched up the Euphrates and met the Egyptian army at Carchemish, and defeated them B.C. 605. Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, sent his son Nebuchadnezzar on to Jerusalem, who besieged that city the latter part of 605 — the third year of Jehoiakim (Dan. 1: 1). Jeremiah speaks of the siege as in 604, Jehoiakim's fourth year, probably in the early part, so that a difference in the period covered by the Babylonian and the Jewish years would account for the

variation. The last part of 605 is treated as Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, and 604 his first year as king.

At this time Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar hasted back to Babylon, taking with him a number of captives including Daniel and his three companions, from royal or princely families, either as hostages or persons whom he could train for his official service.

Thus the beginning of the seventy years' captivity was B.C. 605. It was one of a series of deportations, all under Nebuchadnezzar, all belonging to one campaign, like several battles in one long war.

The names of the four young princes were all compounded with the name of God. Daniel = *God is my judge;* Hananiah = *Jehovah is gracious;* Mishael = *This is as God;* Azariah = *Jehovah is a helper.* Their new names were compounded with those of royalty or of idols. Daniel was named Belteshazzar, *favored of Bel or Beltis*, the great Babylonian god and goddess. The custom of changing names continues up to this day; any change from Mohammedan to Christian, or the reverse, being accompanied by a change of name.

These four were selected from among the captives on account of their noble descent, talent, and promise of ability, to be trained in the language and literature of the Chaldeans, to be trusted officers. This was not an uncommon course, for such men would have less temptation to be disloyal. "Perhaps," says Dr. Gladden, "it was from this story that the Turk got a hint for his janizaries." So the guards at the Vatican in Rome are Swiss soldiers.

A King with His Foot on the Neck of a Captive.

II. **The Young Men's Faith, Courage, and Self-Control.**— Vs. 5, 8, 9. THE TEST OF MANHOOD. When these young men were selected for their future career, several things were appointed for their training, like the training of young men now in professional schools, after college graduation.

1. Their names were changed, as noted above, so that, at least officially, they would be in harmony with the administration, and not known distinctively as Jews. The names did not change their character or their religion.

2. They were to be trained in court customs and ways, doubtless with other young men of heathen morals and religion.

3. They were given luxurious foods such as the king ate, and costly wines such as the king drank, v. 5.

Now here was a strenuous test of the Faith, the Courage and the Self-Control of the young men.

THE TEST OF FAITH. The eating of the king's food would be a breaking of the Jewish law as to food, and thus be a repudiating of the religion of the true God. The dietary would almost certainly comprise articles of food, such as the flesh of swine, hares, etc., which the law interdicted to the Israelites (Leviticus 11). The flesh may not have been perfectly cleansed from blood, and hence forbidden by the Jewish law (Deut. 12: 23–25). Jews, even at this day, have their own butchers, and regard as unclean the meat prepared in the ordinary way. The universal custom among the heathen of consecrating each meal by offering a portion of it to their idols, and pouring out libations of wine in their honor, would place them in the eyes of the people in the ranks of the heathen; and they would be recreant to their country, and their nation, and all the promises and hopes which belonged to them.

THE TEST OF COURAGE, in that to refuse the king's dainties and wines made them peculiar, and would interfere with companionship, popularity, and worldly success. Dr. Matheson puts the case well: The one universal feature of the portrait of Daniel is its answer to the question, What is the quality most needed by a young man? The Book of Daniel I regard as beyond all things the young man's guide-book — the only book which

8. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself [1] with [the portion of] the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9. Now [2] God [had brought made] Daniel [into to find] favour and [tender love with compassion in the sight of] the prince of the eunuchs.

10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces [a] worse liking than the [children youths] which [are are] of your [sort? then shall own age? so] ye make [me should ye] endanger my head [to with] the king.

[1] Deut. 32: 38; Ezek. 4: 13. [2] Gen. 39: 21; Psa. 106: 46. [a] Heb., *sadder*.

has deliberately pointed out the quality which is essential to the formation of character. What is it? It is Courage; the spirit of daring, in the daily walk, hailed by no spectators, cheered by no bands of music. We see Daniel moving in the higher circles, — a popular young man whose company is in much request. He dines at the tables of the rich in the city, when it was the fashion to be dissipated. But he avoids all excesses. He comes out from the banquet as sober as he went in. What he required to do this was not so much self-restraint as courage. What he did was against "good form." It was this which made resistance to it a courageous thing. So far as the wine-cup is merely pleasure it may be resisted *without* courage. But where the use of the wine-cup is "good form" the case is different. It requires a daring man to say, "I decline to be in the fashion; I elect to stand alone." To say that is at once to put yourself in a den of lions; and in this case the mouths of the lions are *not* shut. To refuse conformity was to incur ostracism: for public opinion was on the *side* of the vices. To resist these practices requires the spirit of a hero. — *Condensed* from *Representative Men of the Bible*.

THE TEST OF SELF-CONTROL, in resisting the temptations to appetite and strong drink. For once the power of strong drink gets hold of the body, there is scarcely any temptation that is more overwhelming and harder to resist. It is not one assault, but a steady siege. For myself, all the money in the world would not make me willing to accept a full-grown pervasive appetite for strong drink, even if I were free to resist it all I would.

8. Hence **Daniel purposed in his heart**, literally, "laid it on his heart," **that he would not defile himself with the . . . king's meat.** Am. Ver., "the king's dainties," rich food such as was served at Nebuchadnezzar's table. **He requested of the prince of the eunuchs.** Ashpenaz (v. 3), into whose charge they had been committed. He was superintendent of the eunuchs, who had charge of the king's harem and of the education of the king's sons. **That he might not defile himself.** The prince could easily understand Daniel's reasons.

NOTE CONCERNING THESE FOUR YOUNG MEN. 1. They had an early religious training, as was common among the best Jews. But these boys must have had especially good home religious influences. If you have such homes give God everlasting thanks for them.

2. Their sudden departure from home to be thrown upon their own resources probably helped them to take a decided stand for their religion and their God.

3. They made a clear, decided choice. It is often a good thing for a young man to come to a place where he must make a definite decision, a branching of the roads where he must take one way or the other. Professor Scripture told me that if a bullfrog were placed in cold water, and that water was heated slowly enough, the frog would stay still and be boiled to death; because there was no one moment rather than another when he should make any change. Any sudden change in the temperature would have saved his life. It is often so in life.

4. It was a great advantage to have the four young men together. They were a mutual support. Two together are far more than two ones. We need the social power of co-operative units.

5. The young men were greatly favored by having a friend at court. 9. **God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love.** Am. Ver., "made Dániel to find kindness and compassion." Compare Joseph's case, Gen. 39: 21. God had made Daniel lovable, giving him attractiveness of person and wisdom of mind; moreover, the

11. Then said Daniel to Mel'zar, the steward, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set appointed over Daniel, Hăn-a-nī'ah, Mĭsh'a-el, and Az-a-rī'ah,
12. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us [a] pulse to eat, and water to drink.
13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children youths that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.
14. So he consented to hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days.
15. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and they were fatter in flesh than all the children youths which did eat the portion of the king's meat.
16. Thus Mel'zar So the steward took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.
17. As Now as for these four children, youths, [1] God gave them [2] knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had [3] understanding in all visions and dreams.

[1] 1 Kings 3: 12. [2] Acts 7: 22. [3] Num. 12: 6; 2 Chron. 26: 5; Dan. 5: 11, 12. [a] Or, *herbs*.

Holy Spirit had doubtless moved directly upon the heart of Ashpenaz, turning him toward Daniel. All true love and friendship are inspired by God.

III. **The Testing by Facts.** — Vs. 10–14. **I fear my lord the king.** To do as they requested would be dangerous, if it should prove unsuccessful. **Faces worse liking.** Am. Ver., "worse looking." **Of your sort,** the others who were undergoing the same training, or others of the same age and station.

11. **Said Daniel to Melzar.** Not a proper name, but *the melzar*, the chief butler or steward, who actually furnished the food. Ashpenaz was evidently not unfavorable to the request, though he did not wish to assume responsibility for the change.

12. **Give us pulse to eat.** "Rather, vegetable food in general; there is no reason for restricting the Hebrew word used to leguminous fruits, such as beans and peas, which is what the term 'pulse' properly denotes." — *Cambridge Bible.* **And water to drink,** instead of the wine. They began the simple life. The test lasted for **ten days,** v. 14.

SCIENTIFIC STUDY is simply the finding of all the facts, in their true relations, and learning what these facts teach us. The greatest argument in favor of total abstinence is that which Facts teach us.

One of the best ways of teaching Temperance is to have the children gather facts about the results of drinking. Gather them from observation, from the reports in the daily papers, from the leaders in Athletics, from the experience of business men, railroad men, physicians.

IV. **The Results of the Test.** — Vs. 15–20. FIRST. Better physical condition. **15. Countenances . . . fairer . . . fatter in flesh.** The simple life brought better bodily health, more beauty, greater strength and activity, all that was needed for the best work and the highest joy, of which the body is capable.

Every trainer in Athletics in all our colleges confirms this fact, and acts upon it.

SECOND. The body by this course became the best instrument of the mind and spirit. The brain was clear, the whole physical condition was fitted to endure the strain of best study and work.

17. **These four children,** R.V., "Youths." **God gave them knowledge,** etc. (1) Through the highest physical condition, which made their minds clear, and gave them strength for more prolonged study. (2) By imparting it to them directly, as the visions recorded later. To the higher character and more trained mind God could reveal more truth than to others. (3) By giving his blessing to their daily studies, aiding their minds by his spirit, opening wider doors to knowledge through his providence. (4) By keeping them from those vices, from conceit and selfishness, which distort the judgment and dim the perception of truth. **Skill in all learning.** In science, in astronomy, in literature, in philosophy the Chaldeans at this time stood at the head of the world. **And wisdom.** Power to apply and use and increase this learning. All four had the learning; the special revelations were to Daniel alone. **Understanding in all visions and dreams.**

18. Now / And at the end of the days that / which the king had said he should bring / appointed for bringing them in, then / the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nĕb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar.

19. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hăn-a-nī'ah, Mĭsh'a-el, and Az-a-rī'ah: therefore [1] stood they before the king.

20. [2] And in all matters / every matter of [a] wisdom and / and understanding, that / concerning which the king enquired / inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers / and enchanters that were / were in all his realm.

[1] V. 5. [2] 1 Kings 10: 1. *a* Heb., *wisdom of understanding.*

Through which God revealed the future to Daniel, and also showed him the meaning of the visions which others saw.

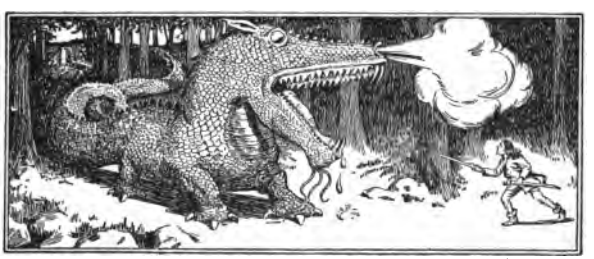
THIRD. The victory over temptation, and this simple living and high thinking, were the means of ennobling the character, strengthening the conscience, clearing the vision, confirming every virtue, developing their manhood; as shown in their subsequent careers.

FOURTH. The power of a long, eminent useful service for God and man.

19. Therefore stood they before the king. Were the personal advisers, and among the leading officers of the kingdom. All officers and servants *stood* when in the presence of the monarch.

20. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding. In everything which required peculiar wisdom to understand and to explain. **He found them ten times better.** "Better counselors, better informed." — *Barnes.* **Than all the magicians and astrologers.** The magicians were the learned class, the scribes, the priestly class. "The astrologers," "reasoners from the stars," were the scientific men, versed in magic and occult science.

The Fight against Intemperance is well illustrated by the story of Cadmus and the serpent-dragon, best told for young people in Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales.* Cadmus, the son of Agenor king of Phœnicia on the Mediterranean coast north of Palestine, was a very brave young man, who set forth to find his sister, and was led by voices to seek his home in Greece. The place to which he was led, and where he was to build his home, was near a beautiful fountain of pure cold water in a grove. But this fountain was guarded by an immense dragon with scales few spears could penetrate, and a great gaping mouth filled with rows of huge teeth. This dragon fed on men, women and children, and as the companions drew near to the fountain the dragon swallowed them as a boy would swallow blackberries, so small were they compared with the monster.



Cadmus and the Dragon.

The Young Man and the Dragon Intemperance.

When he saw Cadmus he flung back his immense jaws until his mouth looked like a great red cavern. But Cadmus was so enraged at the destruction of his friends that he cared neither for the size of the dragon's jaws nor for his hundreds of sharp teeth. Drawing his sword, he rushed at the monster, and flung himself right into his cavernous mouth. This bold method of attacking him took the dragon by surprise; for, in fact, Cadmus had leaped so far down into his throat that the rows of terrible teeth could not close upon him, nor do him the least harm in the world. Thus, though the struggle was a tremendous one, and, though the dragon shattered the tuft of trees into small splinters by the lashing of his tail, yet, as Cadmus was all the while slashing and stabbing at his very vitals, it was not long before the scaly wretch was slain. Again the voice came, and Cadmus was told to take out the dragon's teeth and sow them in the field. Very soon from each tooth there arose out of

the ground an armed giant. The voice again came, and at its word Cadmus threw a stone into the mass of giants, and they fell to killing one another, till all were slain but five.

These five aided Cadmus to build his city near the bright fountain. The workmen had homes in it. A splendid palace sprang up for Cadmus. When the five workmen beheld the dome, with the morning sunshine making it look golden and glorious, they gave a great shout.

"Long live King Cadmus," they cried, "in his beautiful palace."

In time this city became the "hundred-gated Thebes."

It is Cadmus who is said to have introduced the alphabet into Greece.

THE FOUNTAIN is the type of the ideal dwelling place of man, such as any country can become. Pure water is essential to it. So are the living waters of the Gospel that flow from Jesus Christ.

THE DRAGON IS INTEMPERANCE, which has actually destroyed more men and women and children than all the dragons and monsters ever imagined. And it is harder to be overcome.

ITS ROWS OF TEETH are the saloons, distilleries, breweries, and all those shops, drug stores, and patent medicines, which dispense liquor for drinking under any name or pretense.

CADMUS is the representative of all those men and societies which are fighting the dragon. He is the leader of Temperance Societies, Bands of Hope, and the whole Temperance army. He requires courage, moral strength, wisdom, talent, perseverance. Every young man in the land should be one of the Dragon's slayers.

THE BATTLE OF THE GIANTS is now going on.

THE FIVE GIANTS remaining after the battle when the others have slain each other, and saloons and rumshops have passed into destruction, are the Money, Energy, Buildings, Talent and Time, formerly used to spread intemperance, but yet to be used in building up the city of God.

THE CITY, built by the Modern Cadmus, is this world redeemed into the City of God, governed by the law of love, situated by the fountain of the waters of life;—in which all the billions of money, the lives, the talents, the manhood and womanhood, now wasted on the Dragon of Intemperance, shall be spent in giving every citizen all the comforts, education, religion, art, culture, which those that have most now enjoy. Think what a world this would be if we should destroy the Dragon of Intemperance.

THE PLEDGE.

Get all to sign the Pledge. This is one of the most effective ways of promoting Temperance.

WE HEREBY PLEDGE OURSELVES TO ABSTAIN FROM ALL INTOXICATING LIQUORS AS A BEVERAGE.

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LESSON XII. — September 17.

DANIEL'S COMPANIONS IN THE FIERY FURNACE.

Daniel 3.

PRINT vs. 13–28. COMMIT vs. 17, 18.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.***— HEB. 13: 6.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

A distinguished psychologist states that an investigation of many thousands of children has shown conclusively that there are four ways in which knowledge is gained by children.

1. Some gain it most easily through the eye, as by reading.

2. Some gain it better through the ear, by hearing the words read, or the story told.
3. Some remember best through the tongue, by stating the truths themselves.
4. Some receive the deepest impressions through some kind of work with their hands.

Each person learns to some degree in all these ways. But as there is no little difference in different persons, it is well to use all methods in every lesson where it is possible.

In this lesson, by pictures, by reading the dialogue in character, by drawing a map with Babylon as a center, and road lines drawn from it to all the countries mentioned all these four ways of teaching this lesson can be used.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The Septuagint account states that the occasion was "the organizing cities and countries, and all the inhabitants of the earth from India to Ethiopia," and places the date in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. This would put the event in the last part of B.C. 586, immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, on the king's return to Babylon.

Place. — Babylon, the plain of Dura, somewhere in the vicinity of the city.

Place in the History. — Jerusalem destroyed. The Jews in captivity throughout the Babylonian Empire. Daniel in the service of the empire in some part. Jeremiah in Jerusalem. King Zedekiah, and Jehoiachin captives at Babylon. Ezekiel at Chebar in Babylonia.

ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The occasion of this great gathering.
Its place in the events we have been studying. Which lesson?
The Golden Image.
The three heroes; how long they had been in Babylonia.
Why were these men delivered from the flames?
What does this lesson teach us
1. About God's deliverance of his people?
2. About the spirit of the martyrs?

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 17, 18; Isa. 43: 2.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Men in the Fire.

I. THE CONQUEROR'S CELEBRATION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE (vs. 1–7).

II. THE THREE HEROES TRUE TO GOD (vs. 8–18).

III. THE MEN IN THE FIERY FURNACE (vs. 19–23).

IV. THE GREAT DELIVERANCE (vs. 24–28).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The *books on Daniel* referred to in our last lesson. Professor Phelps' *Old Testament Studies*, "The Men in the Fire." "The Song of The Three Children" in the Apocrypha.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, 2: 17, "To Wickliffe"; and Daniel Webster's *Address before the Sons of New Hampshire* in 1849, quoting "The Avon to the Severn runs." In Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Gareth, a king's son in disguise, is sent forth to battle for the liberation of an imprisoned lady, typical of the human soul. He faces death in the form of a dreadful being in black armor, and smiting him through his helmet, he liberates a smiling and beautiful boy. Death is no specter, but a blooming youth. Keble's *Christian Year*, "19th Sunday after Trinity." Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. "The Dream of Gerontius" mentions the three heroes of this story among the list of those who have been mightily delivered from trouble. Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*.

I. The Conqueror's Celebration of Universal Peace. — Vs. 1–7. So far as we can learn Nebuchadnezzar's great assemblage of people from all over his empire had for its object the consolidation of his whole kingdom. He "had just returned from a triumphant campaign against his enemies in the west and south, — against Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, — and he celebrates his return by the erection of a colossal image and a grand religious festival." "The golden image might mark the close of a period of conquest and inaugurate a period of peace." — *Temple Bible*. "The victories of peace were to absorb the remaining half of his reign."

The empire was composed of various countries and races, diverse from one another in disposition, character and interests. They were united by no natural affinity, but by conquest. The whole empire might easily fall to pieces.

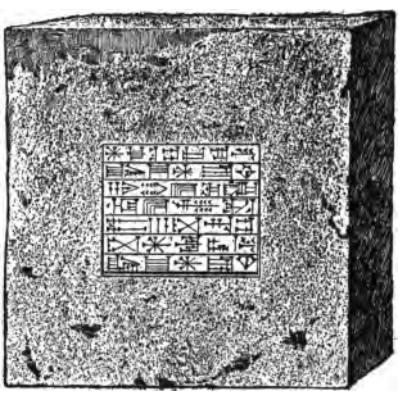
(1) Nebuchadnezzar, like a wise monarch, brought the chief men of each country and race together at the capital. The terms and titles of the original cannot be precisely defined.

1. Princes = Satraps (Rs.) wardens of the realm.
2. Governors = deputies (Rs.).
3. Captains = governors (Rs.).
4. Judges, or chief soothsayers (Rs. margin).
5. Treasurers.
6. Counselors.
7. Sheriffs, or lawyers (Rs. margin).
8. Rulers of the Provinces.

All these with their trains of officers and attendants in gorgeous array. Babylon was crowded with "the beauty and the chivalry" of the empire.

Bringing these together would enable them to realize the glory and power of the capital, would attach them in various ways to the emperor, and make them acquainted with one another. This is one of the powers by which England holds her many differing and distant colonies in one great bond of empire.

(2) Nebuchadnezzar would bind these diverse elements by the power of religious worship, at a common center, of one chief god over all the multitude of idols. As the Jews were bound together by a magnificent Temple at their capital, Jerusalem, whither all went up to worship, so Nebuchadnezzar would place at his capital a huge and costly image, the glory and attraction of the empire. His making Babylon a magnificent city would aid this work. Great fortifications, towers, walls, temples, gates of bronze, hanging gardens, palaces, public buildings of blue, red, yellow and white, the Tower of the Seven Spheres, the Wonder of Mankind palace, — all these would attract people to the capital, as Mohammedans are drawn to Mecca, and the Christians of the middle ages to Rome.



British Museum.

Brick Bearing the Name of Nebuchadnezzar.
About 14 inches square.

THE COLOSSAL IMAGE OF GOLD. This was doubtless reared to the Babylonian tutelary god, Bel-Merodach, and not as some think to Nebuchadnezzar himself. The Cesars did indeed, later, set up images of themselves, attempting to do it in the courts of the Jerusalem temple. But this would not as well accomplish Nebuchadnezzar's purpose.

The image was probably not of solid gold, but of wood or clay covered with plates of gold. The expression, "image of gold," does not necessarily mean that it was of solid gold; it might be used of an image that was merely overlaid with gold. Thus "the altar of gold" of Ex. 39: 38 was in reality overlaid with gold (Ex. 30: 1–3). Herodotus, however (1: 183), mentions a golden statue of Bel at Babylon (much smaller than Nebuchadnezzar's) which was of solid gold, weighing 800 talents of gold, 43,000 pounds.

The size of the image was 60 cubits (= about 90 feet) high and 6 cubits (= 9 feet) broad. For a human figure this would be disproportionately tall. A tall, slender man is about six times as high as he is broad, while the height of this statue was ten times its breadth. It is probable that the height of 90 feet includes the pedestal, and then the image would be proportionate. Thus the statue of *Liberty Enlightening the World*, in New York Harbor, is 151 feet high, upon a pedestal 155 feet high, or 306 feet in all. It is quite likely that the image was but one-half the height of the whole statue.

OTHER COLOSSAL IMAGES. The Colossus of Rhodes was 70 cubits high; and the Colossus of Nero was 110 feet high. At Tanis (the Zoan of the Bible) there have lately been discovered the remains of a colossal statue of Rameses II., made from one block of red granite 92 feet high, besides the pedestal, which must have made the whole 110 feet high.

THE RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES. The multitudes were gathered on the plain around the golden image glittering and radiant in the sun. Besides the officers in their richly colored attire, there was a motley gathering of tribes from every direction. "All diversities of speech and dress and manners were there; all varieties of complexion, from the pale

bronze of the Persian to the black of the Ethiopian. National enemies stood side by side. Dwellers on plain and mountain, in walled towns and in tents of the desert, were in the throng." — *Dr. Hunter*. They spoke many languages, as if the confusion of tongues had been repeated in the same Babel.

HERALDS cried aloud their proclamation in all languages, that when the bands struck their martial music all the people must fall down and worship the Golden Image; **And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.**

THE BANDS OF MUSIC used six kinds of musical instruments, which was so unusual a feature that their names are repeated four times.

1. **Cornet**, a horn, whether straight or curved, used for giving signals like our bugle.

2. **Flute**, reed instruments of two kinds, the long flute played by blowing in one end, as the modern clarionet, or the oblique flute played by blowing in a hole at the side as in the modern flute. Some of these have vibrating tongues like a clarionet, which give a more penetrating sound, and therefore would be best for an out-of-doors band.

It is probable that the word for "flute" in Daniel may express a combination of several of these reeds, as in the syrinx.

3. **Harp**, a stringed lyre or harp, of which there are many kinds.

4. **Sackbut**, a large powerful harp of a rich quality of tone, or a triangular instrument with four strings, making a sharp tone.

5. **Psaltery**, something like a harp with a sounding board, and played by being struck with a plectrum.

6. **Dulcimer**, a kind of bagpipe, like the Scottish bagpipe. It was a combination of pipes supplied with wind by a bladder or leather bag. The Greek word means symphony, a concord of sounds. Many other musical instruments were united with these.

The fact that three of the names of these instruments are Greek words in Hebrew letters has been used as an argument that the Book of Daniel was composed long after his time. But late discoveries by Mr. Petrie at Tahpanhes, Egypt, show that just before Nebuchadnezzar's time this was the seat of the Greek frontier garrison, numbering according to Herodotus 30,000 men. Naturally they would bring their band music with them.

From a Monument in the British Museum.
Procession of Elamite Harpists

II. **The Three Heroes True to God.** — Vs. 8-18. THE WORSHIP. The bands played, and the whole multitude bowed their faces to the ground. Then a strange thing took place; three men stood up alone, and were conspicuous all over the plain, like a city set upon a hill, by their unbowed forms and their splendid robes of office.

These three were, 12. **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego**, the three young men who joined with Daniel in refusing to defile themselves with the king's meat (Dan. 1: 6, 7, etc.). They must have been at this time 30 to 35 years old, in the prime of young manhood and usefulness. They were rulers in the province of Babylon, and therefore prominent men.

THE REPORT TO THE KING. This conduct was quickly reported to the king by certain Chaldeans, ranked among the wise men and magicians (Dan. 2: 2).

Their motives were probably (1) envy "sharper than a serpent's tooth." The word **accused** in v. 8, literally means "ate the pieces of the Jews," "a metaphor of fierce devouring malice." — *Farrar*. (2) The holy, steadfast conduct and faithfulness of these men, which were a constant rebuke; (3) the fact that they were foreigners exalted over the natives. It was a fine opportunity for corrupt men and takers of bribes when they found these righteous men breaking a law of the king, and thus unexpectedly thrown into their power. It was inevitable that men like these three should have bitter enemies.

13. Then Něb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō. Then they brought these men before the king.

14. Něb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar spake answered and said unto them, Is it of purpose, Is it true, O Shā'-drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, do not that ye serve not my gods, god, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

15. Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made: [1] *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; [2] and who is that God god that shall deliver you out of my hands?

16. Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, answered and said to the king, O Něb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar, [3] we are not careful have no need to answer thee in this matter.

17. If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace: and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

[1] As Ex. 32: 32; Luke 13: 9. [2] Ex. 5: 2; 2 Kings 18: 35. [3] Matt. 10: 19.

THE KING'S INDIGNATION. **13. Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury.** It is no wonder that a despot who was "liable to sudden outbursts of almost spasmodic fury," should blaze out in a storm of rage against these three captives, for whom he had done so much, miserable, ungrateful servants, who publicly insulted and defied the conqueror of the world, and the god who had "crowned him with glory and victory." The act was treason! It might bring upon him the anger of his god, — to be shown in future defeats. It marred his plans for the occasion, and brought in discord. It was a public example of resistance to his will and law, that would weaken his authority if allowed to go unpunished.

EXAMPLE. One explanation of the terrible persecutions of the French Huguenots, including St. Bartholomew's day, is the union of state and church, so that disobeying the laws of the church was regarded as treason against the king and his authority, as well as discord in the Catholic régime.

14. Is it true, better R.V., "Is it of purpose," **do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image?** Did you really mean to refuse my command? Are you such insolent fools! It was inconceivable.

15. Now if ye be ready, to obey, the past will be forgiven. **But if ye worship not, . . . a burning fiery furnace!** Let the music sound. **And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?** Do you imagine that your God who let your capital be destroyed by me, and his Temple be burned, his means of worship come to my city, and his people be my captives, — that he can save you? Vain, vain hope! How these facts must have tested and tried the faith of the Three, unless they ever kept before them the reason for God's action.

Nebuchadnezzar's question "was a direct challenge and defiance of the God of Israel, like Pharaoh's. 'And who is Jehovah that *I* should obey his voice?' (Ex. 5: 2), or like Sennacherib's 'who are they among all the gods that have delivered their land out of my hand?' (Isa. 36: 20). It is answered in each case by a decisive interposition." — *Farrar.*

16. The three "with truly magnificent and unflinching courage," **answered and said to the king.** They appear to have answered promptly and without hesitation, showing that they had carefully considered the subject, and that with them it was a matter of settled and intelligent principle. **We are not careful.** Old English for anxious, solicitous. R.V., *We have no need* **to answer thee,** to explain how God could deliver them, or why they must obey him. There was not time, nor would the king understand.

17. If it be so, if we are cast into the fiery furnace, in spite of all you say, **our God whom we serve IS able to deliver us.**

18. But if not. "These three words are among the sublimest words uttered in all Scripture. The willing martyrs were also aware that in many cases it has *not* been God's purpose to deliver his saints out of the peril of death; and it has been far better for them

19. Then was Nĕb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace [one] seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

20. And he commanded [the most certain] mighty men that [were] in his army to bind Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, *and* to cast [them] into the burning fiery furnace.

21. Then these men were bound in their [coats, hosen,] their [a hosen, tunics,] and their [hats, mantles,] and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

a Or, *turbans*.

(and the cause they loved) that they should be carried heavenwards in the fiery chariot of martyrdom."

COMPARE the prayer of Habakkuk (3: 17, 18). **Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.**

THE TWO WAYS OF DELIVERANCE. There are two ways, in one or the other of which, God will always deliver those who trust in him. Sometimes he removes the sickness, the disappointment, the pain, the death.

Sometimes he transforms them into spiritual good, causes them to develop character, enlarge usefulness, increase the power of building up his kingdom, and of aiding our fellow men. Both are deliverances; and when we pray to be delivered it is not for us to decide which way is the better.

III. **The Men in the Fiery Furnace.** — Vs. 19–23. **19. The form of his visage was changed.** By the anger and passion it expressed. His feelings got beyond control. **Heat the furnace one seven times more.** "This fact is mentioned to show the greatness of the miracle which followed." — *Keil.* "Fuel abounded in the locality, and as vast amounts of naphtha were found in the wells around Babylon, there could have been no difficulty in obtaining a very intense heat at the expense of a very small amount of labor." — *Dr. Deane.* The fury of the king defeated itself. For the hotter the fire, the less painful the death.

From the Catacomb of Domitilla.

The Three Children in the Furnace.

20. Commanded the most mighty men. From whom there could be no escape. **Cast them into the burning fiery furnace.** Either, as the editor of Calmet thinks, a fire kindled in the open court, like a place set apart for burning martyrs; or a smelting furnace in the form of a pit with an opening at the top and a door in the side. Possibly one in which the gold was prepared for the image. "In the Catacombs (at Rome) the scene of the Three Children in the fire is common. They are painted walking in a sort of open cistern full of flames, with doors beneath." — *Farrar.*

21. Bound in their coats. R.V., "hosen," **hosen,** "tunics," or "turbans," **and their hats,** outer "mantles" (R.V.), **and their other garments** perhaps for head and feet.

"In the time of Herodotus (1: 195, see Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, III: 1 seq.), the well-to-do inhabitants of the capital wore a long linen gown reaching down to the feet,

22. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō.

23. And these three men, Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24. Then Nĕb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste: *and* he spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, [1] walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the *form* aspect of the fourth is like [2] the Son a son of God the gods.

26. Then Nĕb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar came near to the [a] mouth of the burning fiery furnace: *and* he spake, and said, Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, ye servants of the *most high* Most High God, come forth, and come *hither* hither. Then Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, came forth *out* of the midst of the fire.

27. And the *princes, governors,* satraps, the deputies, and *captains,* the governors, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, [3] *upon whose bodies* that the fire had no power *upon their bodies,* nor was *an* the hair of their head singed, neither were their *coats* hosen changed, nor *had* the smell of fire *had* passed on them.

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[1] Isa. 43 : 2.
[2] V. 28; Job 1 : 6; Psa. 34 : 7.
[3] Heb. 11 : 34.
[a] Aram., *door.*

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a woolen gown or tunic over this, a short cloak or cape of a white color, and shoes like those of the Bœotians. It was in some such dress as this — the long robe (A.V. *coat*), the inner tunic (A.V. *hosen*), the cloak or outer 'clothing' (A.V. *hats*), and their other garments (coverings for head and feet) — that the victims of Nebuchadnezzar's 'fury' went to meet death." — *Cook.* "These separate articles, consisting of easily inflammable material, are doubtless mentioned with reference to the miracle that followed, that even these remained unchanged in the fiery furnace." — *Keil.*

22. The flame of the fire slew those men. In the "Song of the Three Holy Children" in the Apocryphal additions to Daniel, the flames stream out 49 cubits, about 75 feet.

23. Bound. That is, when put into the furnace. Hunter thinks they were bound hand and foot with their own clothes.

In the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, and Latin Vulgate, there follow in this place sixty-eight verses, containing "The Song of the Three Holy Children."

COMPARE the martyrdom of Polycarp. "When bound to the stake a strong wind caught the flames and swirled them into a fiery arch around him, so that his body was left untouched, and from the midst of the blazing fire they heard the martyr's voice in praise and prayer." — *Hunter.*

IV. **The Great Deliverance.** — Vs. 24–28. **Then . . . the king was astonied.** An old and obsolete form of the word *astonished.* "The king sat watching the issue of the matter, looked through the door into the furnace, and saw a sight at which he was astonished and terrified." — *Keil.* He was astonished (1) that the three men were not consumed; (2) that they were loose; (3) that a fourth was with them. The thought flashes upon him that he has come into conflict with a new and unknown power. **Rose up in haste.** Expressing the strength of his astonishment and terror. **Said unto his counsellors.** His own privy council, as distinguished from the princes and governors from other provinces. **Four men loose** instead of three.

25. The fourth is like the Son of God. As the article is wanting in the sacred text, it is more correct to read *a son of the gods* (as in R.V.). Only a divine being, the king knew, could live thus in the fire himself, or preserve others there.

26. Come forth, and come hither. Nebuchadnezzar makes sure that what he sees is real, and not a mere vision.

28. Then Něb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shā'drach, Mē'shach, and A-bĕd'-nĕ-gō, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that [1] trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

[1] Psa. 34 : 7, 8; Jer. 17 : 7; Dan. 6 : 22, 23.

27. The princes . . . saw these men. The deliverance was public, unmistakable, and proved by many witnesses.

28. Blessed be the God of Shadrach, etc. The king recognized the power of the Jews' God, and his readiness to defend those who obeyed him. The miracle would make such an impression on the princes and people that the king could more easily treat the Jews kindly. **Yielded their bodies.** Men who were so faithful to their God that they would die rather than do wrong would be faithful to their king, and could be trusted in all matters. Hence they were reinstated in their places with more influence and permanence than ever.

This deliverance was the answer to the doubts that may have arisen among the Jews, because God suffered them to become exiles. God was able to deliver them, and when they became devoted servants of God, the deliverance would be nigh.

MODERN IMAGES AND FIERY FURNACES. There are still erected golden images, before which the world commands us to bow down and worship, — success, pleasures, wealth, popularity, sinful custom, palatable doctrines, an easy, lax morality.

There are still fiery furnaces for those who refuse to worship the golden image, — social ostracism, unpopularity, losses of place and honor, failure in business. Even children, in these days, are sometimes subjected to a fiery furnace of unpopularity, or ridicule, — sometimes when they try to become Christians, when they obey their parents, contrary to the customs of their companions, in strict Sabbath-keeping, in keeping from doubtful amusements or places of amusement, in faithfulness to study or teachers.

"Through sevenfold flames thine eye shall see
The Saviour walking with his faithful three." — *Keble.*

ILLUSTRATION. There is a tradition among the Mohammedans that Abraham was cast by Nimrod into a furnace of fire for refusing to worship false gods; and the flames, instead of scorching and consuming him, were changed into a bed of jasmines and roses.

ILLUSTRATION. Persecution of Christians is like setting a light upon a hill that it may shine far and wide. So Bishop Latimer, bound to the stake, said to Bishop Ridley, "We shall light such a candle, by God's grace, in England this day, as I trust shall never be put out again."

For illustrations from Luther, see Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship;* and *Words that Shook the World* (Methodist Book Concern).

LESSON XIII. — September 24.

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN. — Daniel 6.

PRINT VS. 10-28. COMMIT VS. 21-28.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.* — PSA. 34: 7.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

One teacher in our Intermediate Room varies his many methods of holding the attention, and impressing truth, by writing a series of questions on cards, one for each pupil. On another series of cards of a different color he writes the brief answers; thus calling attention to some main truths of the lesson.

During the class exercises he distributes the question cards at random one to each scholar. Then mixing up the answer cards he distributes these at random.

Beginning at one end of the class he asks a scholar to read her question. The others

look over their answer cards, and whoever has what she thinks is the answer reads it. Others may think their cards give the true answer. When this is settled, the next scholar reads a question, and so on through the class.

When all the questions have been asked and the answers given, the teacher gathers up the cards of both kinds, and asks the questions of the class, who give the answers from memory.

Thus something of the game element is brought into the teaching, and helps the restless ones to be quiet, while learning something worth while.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Probably B.C. 538, very near the close of the seventy years' captivity, soon after Cyrus had conquered Babylon in B.C. 539.

Place. — Probably in Babylon, as is shown by the close connection of Daniel 5 and 6.

Persons. — *Daniel* was probably 80 years old; as this event was 66 years after his going to Babylon, in 604, and he must have been at least 14 years old at that time.

Cyrus the Persian had just conquered the Babylonians.

Darius the Mede, a viceroy of Cyrus, temporary king of the new province, but not in the line of emperor kings.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Cyrus taking Babylon.
Darius the Mede.
Daniel's career to this time.
Praying toward Jerusalem.
The foolish decree.
True to his conscience.
The way of deliverance.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The various *Commentaries on Daniel.* Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible*, vol. II. Dr. P. H. Hunter's *Story of Daniel, His Life and Times*, and his *After the Exile*, vol. I. *Daniel in the Critic's Den*, by Sir Robert Anderson, K.C.B. Trumbull's *Studies in Oriental Social Life*, "Prayer in the East." Professor Price's *Monuments and the Old Testament*, 227–235.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psalm 23; 90: 1, 14, 15.

TEACH the whole Story.
USE Pictures, and a Map.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT:
- **Man — Faithful to God Even unto Death.**
- **God — Faithful to His Promises in the Hour of Trouble.**

I. CHANGES AT BABYLON SINCE OUR LAST LESSON.

II. THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST DANIEL (vs. 1–9).

III. DANIEL STEADFAST AND TRUE (vs. 10–15).

IV. DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS (vs. 16–18).

V. THE GREAT DELIVERANCE (vs. 19–23, 28).

VI. THE FATE OF THE FALSE ACCUSERS (vs. 24–27).

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Herodotus, and *The Cyropedeia*. Quarles' *Divine Fancies*, "Daniel in the Lions' Den"; Wesley's *Hymns*, "God of Daniel, hear my prayer"; P. P. Bliss's *Hymn*, "Daniel's Band."

THE MONUMENTS.

Clay cylinder of Cyrus describing Babylon.

Clay annals of Nabonidus and Cyrus and various inscriptions now in the British Museum.

THE LESSON IN ART.

Daniel in the Den of Lions, by Riviere,* Cortona, Rubens (in a private collection), also in the Catacombs in Rome. *Daniel's Answer to the King*, Riviere.*

I. **Changes at Babylon Since Our Last Lesson.** — In our last lesson we stood by the Golden Image on the plains near Babylon. We saw the crowds bowing down before it while the heroic three stood up alone. We saw them cast into the fiery furnace, and wonderfully delivered.

This was about 20 years after the deportation of the first captives in B.C. 605–4. It was just after the destruction of Jerusalem and greatest deportation of exiles and treasures to Babylon in 586. They had reached Babylon. They were in the fiery furnace of affliction.

At this point the three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, were preaching a sermon to the captives, heard all over the empire, — "Be true to your God, and your religion at any cost; yield to no seductions of idolatry, and God will deliver you from your burning fiery furnace, as he has delivered us." It was preached at the psychological moment.

It was heard by the Jews in Palestine four centuries later when they were persecuted by Antiochus; but it was needed even more by the exiles in Babylon; and would be worth an hundred times more to the Jews in the fires of Antiochus, because it was true in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and was lived out by the deliverance of these captives a few years later.

For half a century after this the Jews remained in captivity learning their lesson and being trained for their redemption. Nebuchadnezzar died in 562. Cyrus the Persian began his conquering career in 556–4, conquered the Medes, 549, and Babylon in 539.

The end of the Exile was drawing nigh, as foretold by Jeremiah. The seventy years had nearly elapsed. The king who was to bring their deliverance was on the throne. The captives scattered all over the empire needed to know this and to be prepared. They had felt the horrors of the wars and rumors of wars, they had seen as it were the stars falling from the political sky, as Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. They needed to know that the time of their redemption was drawing nigh, and to be prepared for it.

Here comes in the event of our lesson. Darius, Cyrus, Daniel, known all over the empire, were to present a resplendent light that would shine into every corner of the realm. Multitudes of the exiles must have suffered for their religion, and they might feel that God was not their friend and helper if Daniel's experience always resulted favorably while theirs did not. And they needed a visible object lesson of the delivering power of God to encourage their hope and faith for the deliverance of their nation from the "den of lions" in which they had been living for almost seventy years.

From the Palace of Darius.
A Persian Relief.

Daniel must have been between eighty and ninety years old at this time. He had had many trials of his character and faithfulness. He was an exile from home and native land, among enemies to his race and to his God. His native land was desolate, his relatives scattered; his people were exiles amid many difficulties that must have tested their faith to the utmost. But on the whole Daniel had been eminently successful, as he was worthy of success. He had maintained his high character. His course had been one of almost unbroken prosperity. The severe trials to which he had been subjected had hitherto resulted only in raising him to higher honors and success.

In the *American Journal of Numismatics* for February, 1908, is a strong argument for believing that Daniel introduced into the Babylonian Empire the standard coinage and weights of the West including Palestine; while at the same time "it was not so much of an innovation as a restoration of the ancient standards."

II. **The Conspiracy against Daniel.** — Vs. 1–9. DARIUS THE MEDE is not mentioned by this name in secular history, for he was not in the succession of kings. It is

quite probable that he was the Gobry'as, Cyrus' general who captured Babylon in July, while Cyrus did not enter the city till October. "All that the Bible says of him coincides with what the (Babylonian) Tablet says of him." — *Temple Bible.* The pronunciation of the names in the different languages where names were written as spoken, is much more similar than in many well known modern instances, as York, which is the Latin Eboracum, and Florence, the same as the Italian Firenze. Darius was merely a viceroy, the king of one province, as is frequently seen in history. For instance Herod was king in Palestine, while Cesar was king of the whole Roman empire of which Palestine was a part.

THE DESIRE TO REMOVE DANIEL. Under Darius, Daniel was recognized as a man of great ability and integrity, and one who could be trusted implicitly. Accordingly, he made him one of the three presidents over the one hundred and twenty governors of as many provinces into which the kingdom was subdivided.

It was not long before the other officers determined that in some way or other, by fair means or foul, they would get rid of Daniel.

THE REASONS were doubtless (1) first and chiefly that he stood in the way of their dishonest gains. Such officers in those times almost always made their position a means of wealth. They soon found that Daniel "would neither wink at their misdeeds nor share in their dishonesties." "He would tolerate no semblance of injustice, either toward the subjects, on the one hand, or the emperor on the other." — *Wm. M. Taylor.* (2) Daniel was a foreigner and a Jew, of a slave race, exalted over them, and holding the place which they or their friends wanted. (3) Daniel's character was a perpetual reproof. They were tired of seeing his good deeds and hearing his praise; as the Athenian who voted for the condemnation of Aristides the Just, simply because he was weary of hearing him called the Just. (4) Envy because Daniel was preferred before them on account of his wisdom and honesty, and higher honors still were planned for him (v. 1).

"It is the practice of the multitude to bark at eminent men, as little dogs do at strangers."
— *Seneca.*

"Envy is a kind of praise."
— *Jay.*

"Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue;
But like a shadow, prove the substance true."
— *Pope.*

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny."
— *Shakespeare.*

THE PLANS OF THE CONSPIRATORS. The officials opposed to Daniel devised two plans by which to accomplish their purpose.

1. The first plan was to find some wrong-doing on Daniel's part, of which to accuse him to the king. "They scrutinized his conduct through the keen microscope of malice," but failed to find any fault, "though he stood in that fierce light that beats upon a throne, and blackens every blot." This plan was a complete failure, because of Daniel's faithful performance of all his duties.

2. The second plan was to make use of Daniel's faithfulness itself. They found that their only hope of entrapping him was through his well-known religious convictions and habits of worship, and his unflinching obedience to conscience. They persuaded the king to make a decree that no one should ask any favor of God or of man, except of the king himself, for a month, on penalty of being thrown into the den of lions.

"The meaning is, not any petition absolutely, but any petition in the nature of a prayer, or request addressed formally to a superior." — *Driver* in *Cambridge Bible.* It is not at all probable that the decree referred to the common daily intercourse of man with man, for that would be perfectly irrelevant to the purpose of the officials who asked the decree.

Kings in ancient times wished to be regarded as gods. In later Roman times the Cæsars claimed divine honors, and Christians were charged with treason, and executed because they refused to worship the emperor. This explains the decree requiring petitions to be addressed to no other god.

It seems strange that any king could sign such a decree. "But probably Daniel's enemies made the king believe that this would be a fine practical test of the fealty of his new subjects." — *Professor Beecher.* "The suggestion was skilfully adapted to Darius' overweening self importance" (McLaren), standing as he was in the shoes of the two greatest kings of the age, — Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. There is scarcely a limit to the conceit of some men raised suddenly to power who imagine that "when they walk east the world tips up west" or, "who when riding on horseback bow their heads lest they should strike the stars from their orbits."

III. **Daniel Steadfast and True.** — Vs. 10–15. **Now,** even **when Daniel knew,** etc. Daniel knew that he was walking amid "many a pitfall, many a snare," he knew that

10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; (and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem;) and he kneeled upon his knees [2] three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

11. Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel praying making petition and making supplication before his God.

12. [3] Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; interdict; Hast thou not signed a decree, an interdict, that every man that shall ask a petition of make petition unto any God god or man within thirty days, save of unto thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, [4] according to the law of the Mēdes and Per'sians, which altereth not.

[1] 1 Kings 8 : 44; Psa. 5 : 7.
[2] Psa. 55 : 17; Acts 2 : 1, 2, 15; 3 : 1; 10 : 9.
[3] Dan. 3 : 8.
[4] V. 8.

for him "Life hath quicksands, life hath snares," as many and as dangerous as the slime-pits in the vale of Siddim which entrapped the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah.

ILLUSTRATION. While Athens was governed by the thirty tyrants, Socrates was ordered to do some unjust act. This commission Socrates positively refused. "I will not willingly," said he, "assist in an unjust act." Chericles sharply replied, "Dost thou think, Socrates, to talk in this high tone and not to suffer?" "Far from it," replied he, "I expect to suffer a thousand ills, but none so great as to do unjustly." — *Dr. George M. Adams' Biblical Encyclopedia.*

And his windows being open in his chamber, etc. "More clearly and more exactly *Now he had in his roof-chamber open windows fronting Jerusalem.* The clause is parenthetical, and describes the constant and habitual arrangement of Daniel's windows." — *Professor Driver.*

Toward Jerusalem. If he could not worship in the Temple, he would keep it in mind as an aid to devotion. "By a natural and beautiful impulse, he looked away westwards, through the open lattice, to the place where the ruined house stood desolate; and, with the passionate devotion of the exile, in imagination laid his sacrifice of prayer on the cold altar." — *Maclaren.* It was (1) a recognition of God's promise to Solomon in favor of those who looked toward this center of his worship (1 Kings 8: 30, 35, 47, 48). (2) It was a recognition of the God of Israel, and of his promise that his people should return to their home. (3) It cherished the spirit of devotion because the place and its associations have an influence upon our spirits, and give them wings, or weigh on them like a burden. **Kneeled upon his knees.** A fitting attitude for humble prayer, favoring the spirit of devotion. **Three times a day.** Like the psalmist (Psa. 55: 17). Morning and evening were the times of the daily sacrifice in which the incense symbolized and was accompanied by prayer. The third hour may have been noon, when he would be most easily seen. **As he did aforetime.** He made no change in his habits. He was not making any display of courage, or of defiance to the decree.

The knowledge of the decree made no difference. It would not have done to swerve a hair's breadth. He could have prayed in secret, and been heard by God, but that course would have been a public confession of want of faith in God, and of yielding to the enemy. He would say as Nehemiah said to Shemaiah, "Should such a man as I flee?" (Neh. 6: 11.) Daniel made no show of his religion, but simply went on his daily path of life, as if no such order had been given. (1) To have done otherwise would have proclaimed his want of faith and of faithfulness, and dishonored his religion and his God. (2) There was no time when he needed to pray more than at this time. It was on the eve of the Return, and all such great religious crises are ushered in with earnest prayer. (3) A failure, or even a seeming failure, on Daniel's part would have had a disastrous effect on the religious principles of the exiles. A man in his position had better die a thousand deaths than to falter and fall.

NOTE the times Daniel prayed each day. Some one has said that no time is lost from the harvesting by sharpening the scythe. One of Luther's sayings was, "*Orare est laborare,*" to pray is to work. Daniel's posture in prayer was also the most helpful to the spirit of prayer. President Hopkins used to tell his pupils that whosoever refused to take some natural attitude in devotion would in time lose the spirit of devotion.

13. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, [1] which *is* of the children of the captivity of Jū'dah, [2] regardeth not thee, O king, nor the *decree* interdict that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

14. Then the king, when he heard *these* these words, [3] was sore displeased *with himself*, and set *his* his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to *deliver* rescue him.

15. Then these men assembled *together* together unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that [4] *the* it is a law of the Mēdes and Per'sians, *is*, That that no *decree* interdict nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast *him* him into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

[1] Dan. 1 : 6 ; 5 : 13. [2] Dan. 3 : 12. [3] Mark 6 : 26. [4] V. 8.

12. The law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. "In this two principles are involved: one, the existence of a settled law or rule by which the king himself, theoretically at any rate, is bound, and which he cannot alter; the other, the inclusion, under this law or rule, of the irrevocability of a royal decree, or promise." For to alter it would be a confession of fallibility, and therefore a denial that he was a god.

13. The leaders were now sure of their case. Every door of escape was shut against Daniel. They had simply to announce to the king that Daniel was guilty.

14. The king . . . was sore displeased . . . laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. But he failed on account of the unalterable law. "Yet the strenuous action which he afterwards adopted shows that he might, even then, have acted on the principle which the Magi laid down to Cambyses, son of Cyrus, that 'the king can do no wrong.' There seems to be no reason why he should not have told these 'tumultuous' princes that if they interfered with Daniel they should be flung into the lions' den. This would probably have altered their opinion as to pressing the royal infallibility of irreversible decrees."—*Farrar*. So Ahasuerus got around "the unalterable law" that doomed Esther and her people.

15. Every effort of the king was met by the statement that the interdict was unalterable. "A strong man would have crashed through the cobwebs, but this 'god' was a weak man."

IV. **Daniel in the Den of Lions.**—Vs. 16–18. **16. They brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.** This was according to Oriental custom on the evening of the same day. The story of the den of lions is strictly in keeping with Babylonian usages. Assurbanipal says in his annals, "The rest of the people I threw alive into the midst of the bulls and lions, as Sennacherib, my grandfather, used to do."

Canon Tristram says, "Lions, which though all but extinct in India, and absolutely so in other parts of Asia, are still common in Babylon and Persia, were kept in the parks of great princes as part of their estate. The same custom still continues among the native rulers of India, and is alluded to in the Assyrian monuments. The dens in which wild beasts are confined are not cavernous, or vaults, like those in which the Romans kept the wild beasts in readiness for the cruelties of the amphitheater. They are simply pits open to the sky, but enclosed with high walls." The bears' den in Bern, Switzerland, is built in the same manner. It is one of the attractions, the bear being the heraldic emblem of Bern.

In Professor Pusey's *Daniel* is an account of a lions' den in Morocco which may be like the one at Babylon.

"The lions' den was a large quadrangular hole in the ground, divided by a partition into two chambers. This wall has a door which can be opened and shut from above. The keepers of the lions (mostly Jews) throw food into the one division and so entice the lions thither, then they shut the door from above and clean the other division. The whole is under the open sky, and is only encircled with a wall over which people can look in."

The king spake assuring words to Daniel. Daniel had been true to his king who wished to save him; how much more would the great God whom Daniel served, protect his faithful servant.

17. [1] And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; [2] and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that [the purpose nothing] might [not] be changed concerning Daniel.

18. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were [a] instruments of [musick music] brought before him: [3] and his sleep [went fled] from him.

19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20. And when he came [near to unto] the den [to Daniel,] he cried with a lamentable voice [unto Daniel: and] the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, [4] is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21. Then said Daniel unto the king, [5] O king, live for ever.

22. [6] My God hath sent his angel, and hath [7] shut the lions' mouths, [that and] they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23. Then was the king exceeding glad [for him,] and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, [8] because he [believed had trusted] in his God.

[1] Lam. 3 : 53.
[2] Matt. 27 : 66.
[3] Dan. 2 : 1.
[4] Dan. 3 : 15.
[5] Dan. 2 : 4.
[6] Dan. 3 : 28.
[7] Heb. 11 : 33.
[8] Heb. 11 : 33.
a Or, *dancing girls.*

17. Stone . . . laid upon the mouth of the den. The mouth was the door through which the animals were put into the den. "A great stone is still an ordinary way of securing a doorway in the East, as we know it was for closing tombs." **Sealed it with his own signet.** "If the access to the lions' den was arranged like that of a sepulcher, a bar would be fixed across the front of the stone, fastened to either side of the doorway by thongs, the knotting of which was sealed with wax stamped with a signet."

18. The king . . . passed the night fasting. The idea that lies at the basis of fasting is grief so deep that it takes away the desire for food. The king was grieved at the loss of Daniel, but that grief was greatly increased by his consciousness that the evil came upon him through his own weakness and sin. **Neither were instruments of musick.** For his enjoyment. The word for instruments is of uncertain origin and meaning. "Concubines" is the probable rendering. — *Professor Toy.*

"Mr. Moody used to say that he thought Daniel made a pillow of one of the lions and slept well."

THE CONTRAST. "What a contrast between the restless night of Darius, with all his luxuries round him, but all spoiled by a troubled conscience, and the quiet night of Daniel among the crouching and muzzled lions! And what a contrast between the 'lamentable voice' of the anxious king and the cheery answer that came up from the pit!" — *Maclaren.*

V. **The Great Deliverance.** — Vs. 19–23, 28. The king hasted to the lions' den at early dawn, to see whether Daniel was safe, whether the Lord whom Daniel served and trusted had delivered him.

22. Daniel answered from the den of lions, "**My God hath sent his angel.**" He "does not say whether the angel was visible or not. The winds and the lightning are God's angels according to the psalmist. But it is probable that he was visible to Daniel, as a manifest token of the favor and protection of God. It is no more absurd to suppose that God employs angels to defend his people, or to impart blessings, than that he employs one human being to convey important blessings to another." — *Barnes.* (See Heb. 1 : 14.) "So Daniel had company in the den of lions." "No music nor gladness in the palace, but celestial joy in the intercourse between Daniel and the angel in the den." — *Taylor.*

Innocency was found in me. Daniel declares that he had been faithful to God and hence God had seen fit to deliver him. It was God's endorsement of his character. His faithfulness would have shown God's power, and commended him to men, even if Daniel had died as a martyr. But the deliverance was an open declaration that God was on Dan-

iel's side. **And also before thee.** Daniel had been as true to his king as he had been to his God. Faithfulness to God made him faithful to man.

23. And no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed, "had trusted" (R.V.) **in his God,** and had proved it by his life.

THE REWARD of faithfulness was a larger opportunity for faithfulness and its influence for good.

ILLUSTRATION. *Ad Leones.* One of Doré's most characteristic pictures is called *Ad Leones,* "To the Lions." The scene is in a Roman amphitheater, where Christians are being torn to pieces by lions, before the heathen crowd. But above, unseen by their persecutors, are multitudes of angels, welcoming to the joys of heaven those who are being destroyed below.

ILLUSTRATION. There are many faithful Daniels whose names are not written in history. There are martyrs in almost every town and village, crucified on unseen crosses, burned with invisible flames, shut up in spiritual dens of lions. It is true of martyrs as of others that: —

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

"Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood."
— *Thomas Gray.*

"Escape from self is better than escape from a lion." — *Syrian Proverb.*

VI. **The Fate of the False Accusers.** — Vs. 24–27. Their punishment was absolutely necessary for the promotion of good, and the destruction of evil. Perfect love casteth out fear. But those who have no love of God and good, will not be restrained from crime unless they know that punishment is sure to follow.

"As Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai; as, according to the ballad of Southey, Sir Ralph the Rover, who cut away the Inchcape Bell, perished upon the Inchcape Rock; as, according to the general principle which the Psalmist announces, the wicked fall into the pit which they make for others (Psa. 7: 15, 16; 9: 15, 16), so these persecutors were taken in the net which they had woven for Daniel's ensnarement." — *Wm. M. Taylor.*

COMPARE THE FATE OF THE MURDERERS OF JESUS. "Judas died by his own hand. Pilate was soon recalled, degraded, banished to Gaul, where he committed suicide. The tower from which he is said to have precipitated himself is still standing. The prize for which he staked his soul never became his. Herod died in infamy and exile; Caiaphas was deposed the next year." — *G. W. Clark.* "The house of Annas was destroyed a generation later by an infuriated mob, and his son was dragged through the streets and scourged and beaten to his place of murder." — *Farrar.*

"Standing by a purpose true,
Heeding God's command,
Honor them, the faithful few,
All hail to Daniel's Band!
Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known!

"Many mighty men are lost,
Daring not to stand,
Who for God had been a host,
By joining Daniel's Band.
Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known!"

Jerusalem.

FOURTH QUARTER.

OCTOBER 1 — DECEMBER 31, 1911.

LESSON I. — October 1.

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL A WATCHMAN.

Ezekiel 3.

PRINT vs. 12-21. COMMIT vs. 17-19. READ Ezekiel 2, 3, 33.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*** — EZEK. 3: 17.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Ezekiel, excepting three or four chapters, is among the least read of the prophets, and one who reads it through can easily understand the reason.

At the same time it was very effective in its day for its purpose; and the methods of the prophet, — acted parables, visions, picturesque allegories, scattered all through the book like gems, — can be used by the modern teacher to interest and instruct those under his charge.

It is well therefore for the teacher to use as many of these as he can as tributaries to the Lesson's main stream of living waters.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 17–19; Isaiah 21, last clause of v. 11 and first of v. 12.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

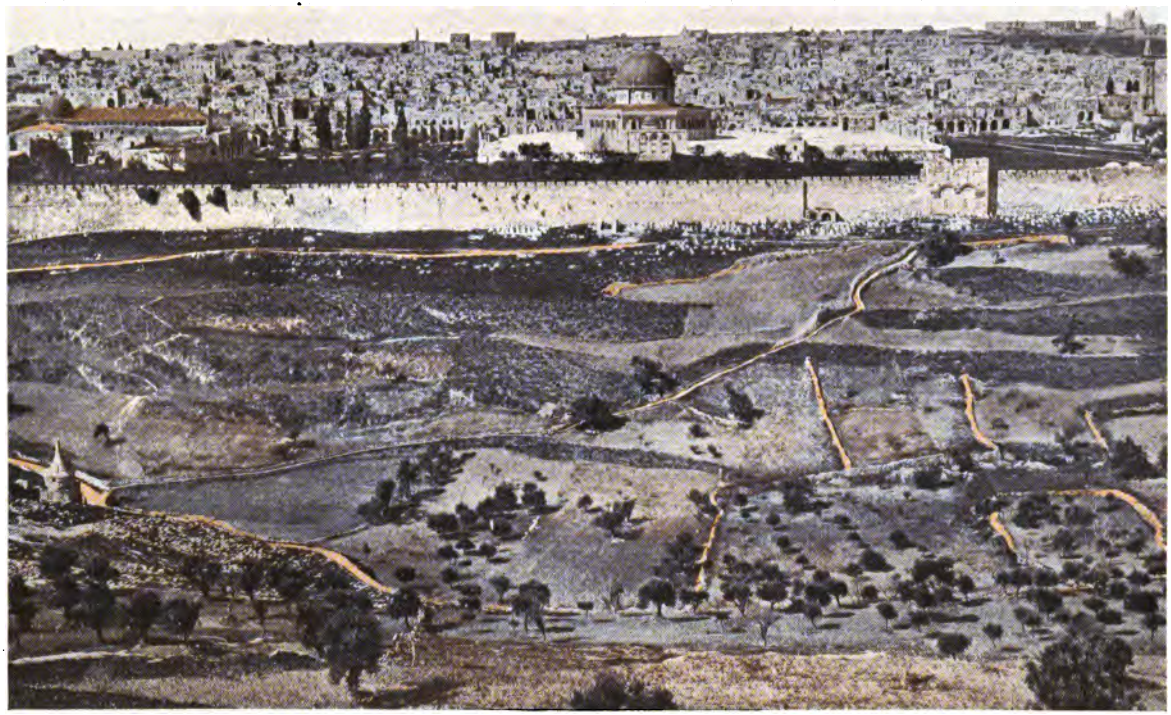
Time. — Ezekiel was carried into exile B.C. 597, in the second deportation by Nebuchadnezzar from Jerusalem; when 10,000 were carried to Babylon with King Jehoiachin.

The prophecy of this lesson was written B.C. 592, five years later.

The first 24 chapters of Ezekiel, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem were written during the 4 years 592–588. B.C. 588 was the beginning of the last siege of Jerusalem which ended in its complete destruction.

Place. — The Book of Ezekiel was written at Tel-abib (= Cornhill) on the river Chebar, one of the large irrigating canals of Babylonia, running across the plain between the Euphrates and the Tigris.

This part of his book was written for the Jews still remaining in Jerusalem, and for the exiles in Babylonia.



GENERAL VIEW OF JERUSALEM.
From Mount of Olives.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The prophet Ezekiel.
The Book of Ezekiel.
The conditions in Babylonia and Jerusalem.
What Ezekiel was trying to accomplish.
The vision of Ezekiel, the cherubim.
The roll which Ezekiel ate.
Some of the methods by which Ezekiel enforced and illustrated his message.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Persuading Men to Give Heed to the Watchman's Warnings.

I. THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.
II. THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL.
III. EZEKIEL'S CHAMBERS OF IMAGERY.
IV. THE VISION OF GOD (Ezekiel 1).
V. EATING THE ROLL OF THE BOOK (Ezek. 2: 9—3: 11).
VI. THE WATCHMAN ON THE WALLS (Ezek. 3: 12–21).
MODERN APPLICATIONS.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Westminster Commentary on Ezekiel, by H. A. Redpath, M.A., Oxford Lecturer. (1907.) *Expositor's Bible, Ezekiel*, by Prof. John Skinner, London. *The Cambridge Bible*, by Prof. A. B. Davidson, D.D., LL.D. *The Polychrome Bible, Ezekiel*, by Professor Toy, D.D., of Harvard. *Jeremiah, Ezekiel — Two Studies*, by Pres. W. G. Ballantine, D.D., LL.D. Capital. *The New Century Bible*, Ezekiel. *By the River of Chebar*, Rev. H. E. Lewis, (Hodder, London). *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, by Dr. Guthrie. Dr. Matheson's *Representative Men of the Bible*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Hall Caine's *The Bondman*, two legends in the Proem. Southey's *Poems*, "The Inchcape Rock." Whittier's *Poems*, "Ezekiel." *Ezekiel and Other Poems*, by B. M. (Nelson's).

THE LESSON IN ART.

The Vision of Ezekiel, by Raphael * in the Pitti Palace, Florence. *Ezekiel*, by Sargent,* in the Public Library at Boston; by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, Rome; by Burne-Jones; by Doré; by Tintoretto in San Rocco, Venice.

I. **The Prophet Ezekiel.** — His name means "God strengthens." He was a priest, the son of Buzi, probably a family name. He was also one of the greatest of the prophets. He was probably 30 years old when he began to prophesy in B.C. 597 (Ezek. 1: 1) which would put the date of his birth in Josiah's reign, about the time Jeremiah began to prophesy, and five years before Josiah's great reformation and the finding of the Book of the Law.

He was a married man; and the sudden death of his wife was made by divine instruction a lesson to the people (Ezek. 24: 15–27). He went on with his work "with a broken heart, but an unbroken purpose." He was a man of power and courage, holding his face as adamant against wrong, but attractive and persuasive in encouraging the people to prepare for their return from exile.

He was a man of great imagination, using simile, allegory, parables in action, symbols, symbolic actions. He saw visions, and dreamed dreams. He had spiritual experiences. But he was also the most practical of men.

"To know a man, study his models," says Matheson. Ezekiel's model heroes were Noah, Job, Daniel. They all had lost their world, but "Noah inaugurated a new world; Job ended by seeing God in the whirlwind." Daniel did great things for his native country in his new country.

Ezekiel was an exile, but in that exile was a mighty force in the renewal of his native land.

II. **The Book of Ezekiel** naturally divides itself into two parts.

THE FIRST HALF, chapters 1 to 24, was written in the four years just before the final siege of Jerusalem, while there was still opportunity for the nation to repent and be saved from destruction. During this period Ezekiel used every possible means of influencing the Jews to turn to God and be saved. He urged, he pleaded, he set forth their danger in alarming terms, he showed them the love of God for them, how he pleaded with them. **"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye."** Then he held up before them, in the most terrible words that language could express, by pictured symbols of the siege, by the vision of God, by acted parables, their fate if they refused to repent: "The soul

that sinneth it shall die." "The whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds," "neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity." "Evil arrows of famine," "pestilence," "evil beasts," "the sword," "furious rebukes," "cities laid waste," "melted as silver is melted in the furnace," "destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none," — all these and more, repeated over and over again, were placed in their downward path, crying with all their might, Turn back, Turn back, Turn ye for why will ye die! The people did not take warning. Nebuchadnezzar had begun his great siege. It was now too late. The warning bell ceased to ring. Ezekiel 24 was written on the 10th day of the 10th month, 588, the date given in 2 Kings 25: 1, for the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah's reign.

THE SECOND HALF OF EZEKIEL, chapters 25–48, was written or spoken chiefly during the sixteen years between B.C. 586, the year in which Jerusalem was destroyed, and 570, about the middle of the 70 years' exile. Most of these prophecies however were written in 586 and 585, at the very time of the capture of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the journey of the exiles to Babylonia.

THE CHARACTER OF THESE LATER PROPHECIES marks a decided change in Ezekiel's method in trying to save his nation. First, there is an interlude (chapters 25–32)— in which the prophet utters oracles against the surrounding nations. The reason for these judgments upon the sins of the idolatrous nations seems to be, —

(1) To show both the Jews and the Gentiles that the punishment of the Jews was on account of sin, the same sins as the Gentiles were committing, and for which they must suffer the consequences.

(2) The nations were destroyed without hope because there was no hope of their repenting; while the people whom God had been so long training would be brought to repentance at last. As a father seeing his own boy do wrong among a crowd of bad boys, takes his son away and punishes him *because* he is his son.

(3) It was by these nations that the Jews were led into idolatry, and weakening or destroying them would make the return to Palestine safer for the exiles. Thus in the words of Professor Skinner, "The motive of the judgments announced is to prepare the way for the restoration of Israel, by removing the evil influences which had sprung from the people's contact with its heathen neighbors in the past (Ezek. 28: 24–26; 29: 16)."

(4) In the words of Professor Davidson; "These judgments will awaken the nations to the knowledge of who the God of Israel is."

In the remaining chapters Ezekiel is bringing hope to the exiles, preparing them to be restored, first to God, and then to their country, urging upon them the new heart, spiritual regeneration like a resurrection from the dead, a new vision of their God, a new temple, and temple service of worship.

III. Ezekiel's Chambers of Imagery.

Chapter I. The vision of the Cherubim, discussed in this lesson.

Chapters II., III. The roll of the Book. In this lesson.

Chapter IV. The pictured tile, on which the prophet made vivid the coming siege of Jerusalem, as we would make a diagram before an audience, on the blackboard. A plan of the city, and around it battering rams, towers, camps and all the paraphernalia of a siege, — these warned the people of their coming danger, unless they repented.

Chapter IV. As a symbolic action the prophet is bidden to lie on his left side for 390 days, then for 40 days on his right side, something as Simon Stylites lived for 30 years on the top of a pillar near Antioch, preaching to the people who came to see him, — a protest against worldliness.

Chapter V. The prophet one day openly before the people cut off the hair of his head and beard. He then took some scales, weighed the hair, and divided it into three parts. One third part he burned with fire in the midst of the city; another third part he smote about with a knife; and the remaining part he scattered to the winds; showing how in Jerusalem a third of the people would be consumed by pestilence and famine, a third should be slain by the sword, and the rest should be scattered as exiles far and wide like chaff in the wind.

Chapter VIII. The prophet in his own house, with the elders of Israel, either in vision or in action, went to the door of the court, where he saw a hole in the wall, digged through the wall till he came to a room, where he saw portrayed upon the walls every form of crawling things and abominable beasts. "Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth."

Chapter IX. is the vision of setting a mark on the foreheads of those who had been

true, while the executors of justice went through the city and began to slay all those who had not upon them the mark of righteousness; till the prophet fell on his face and cried out, "Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?" Just as to-day the day of judgment is coming upon so many who have been sinning in secret.

Chapter XII. shows the prophet moving from his house, carrying his household goods day by day before the people, as one going into captivity.

Chapter XVIII. shows the prophet preaching a sermon on the proverb, — "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge;" to answer a complaint and excuse of the people.

Chapter XXIV. contains the pathetic story of the prophet's wife, the desire of his eyes, his strength and joy, whom God by some sudden stroke took from him. He was not to show the usual signs of mourning, but only mourn with an inward grief too deep for utterance. "Sorrow concealed doth burn the heart to cinders."

"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break." — *Macbeth.*

Such would be the grief of the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they lost "their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they had set their minds." "By my ruined home I stand to speak for God." — *B. M.* See *Ezekiel and other poems*, by B. M. (T. Nelson, 1885).

All these and others were object lessons to urge the people to repent and be saved from their sins and the overwhelming flood of calamity which was certain to come if they continued in sin.

One other allegory, the most interesting of all, that of The Valley of Dry Bones, will come into the next lesson. For the younger classes, who are not set as watchmen, these acted parables and allegories in this part of the lesson may be made most effective.

IV. **The Vision of God.** — Ezekiel 1. The God of Israel was an invisible God, without any representation to the senses. It was hard for the people to realize His existence and His presence. It is hard for us, but much harder for them. The temple and its ritual were an aid. God's works in nature were His manifestation. The visible effects of obedience, and disobedience, were revelations of God's nature. But times of trial and disaster at first hid His face from them as storm clouds hide the sun.

Hence in this dark period Ezekiel was taught to express God's presence, power, glory, goodness, providence, by apocalyptic symbols, i.e., by symbols which expressed ideas, but could not be put into any pictorial form which might lead to idolatry. The first chapter is a vision of these symbols, to make God real to the people; as to Job God made himself known in the whirlwind and the storm, with blazing fires lighting up the clouds.

Nothing is more suitable than that the voice of God should come from the whirlwind. For air, wind, is one of the chosen symbols of God working through his Holy Spirit, as at Pentecost.

It is invisible, as are the great natural forces of the earth.

Symbols of Ezekiel.

12. Then [1] the spirit (took, lifted) me up, and I heard behind me (a, the) voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed (be, be) the glory of the LORD from his place.

13. (And) *I heard* (also) the noise of the wings of the living creatures (that, as they) [c] touched one another, and the noise of the wheels (over against, beside) them, (and a, even the) noise of a great rushing.

14. So [2] the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went [b] in bitterness, in the [c] heat of my spirit; (but, and) [3] the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Tĕl-ā'bib, that dwelt by the river [of] Chē'bar, and [4] (I sat where they sat, and remained to where they dwelt; and I sat) there (astonished, astonied) among them seven days.

[1] V. 14; Ezek. 8: 3; Acts 8: 39.
[2] V. 12; Ezek. 8: 3.
[3] 2 Kings 3: 15; Ezek. 1: 3; 8: 1.
[4] Job 2: 13; Psa. 137: 1.
a Heb., *kissed*.
b Heb., *bitter*.
c Heb., *hot anger*.

It is known by its works, by what it does.

It is mysterious, no one knows whence it comes or whither it goes. No Weather Bureau knows why or whence. It can only observe and report its movements.

It is very powerful. The air is so powerful that even free dynamite smiting against it on one side crushes the rocks on the other.

Yet it is very gentle and delicate, breathing around the rose, and gently touching the little child.

It comes pure from heaven.

The air is all-pervasive. It penetrates the hardest rock.

It is the breath of life. No one can live without it.

Then came the strange figures of the cherubim, representing the spiritual intelligence by man, power by the lion, patient enduring work by the ox, the lofty penetrating, far seeing vision by the eagle. The living creatures and the moving wheels seem to represent the universal Providence, and the throne on the firmament, and the rainbow, gave "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." "There is," says President Ballantine, "the splendor of the rainbow, and the rush of the storm-wind, and wheels like whirlwinds, and the roar of the cataract or the breakers of the ocean." "The cherubim chariot is not to be regarded as anything more than a symbolical representation of God as enthroned over all the elements and powers and forces of creation."

V. **Eating the Roll of the Book.** — Ezek. 2: 9—3: 11. The prophet was presented with a Hebrew roll, the form in which their books were made, and was bidden to eat it. The roll represented the Word of God, his message to Israel. The prophet's eating the roll, meant that he was to become so saturated with God's message that it would become a part of his very being. This gives us "some guidance in forming a proper estimate of what is involved in inspiration. The prophet is to absorb into himself what is given him from above, and then give it out with his own lips and in his own language." — *Professor Redpath.*

3. **It was in my mouth as honey for sweetness**, that is it was good in itself. But afterwards, as in Rev. 10: 9, it became bitter (Ezek. 3: 14) for it was a terrible message to give to his people, so that God made his face as **adamant harder than flint, for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. Fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks.**

"The burden of a prophet's power
Fell on me in that fearful hour;
From off unutterable woes
The curtain of the future rose;
I saw far down the coming time
The fiery chastisement of crime,
With noise of mingling hosts, and jar
Of falling towers and shouts of war,
I saw the nations rise and fall,
Like fire-gleams on my tent's white wall.
. . . . . .
O'er my spirit dark and slow
The shadow crept of Israel's woe
As if the angel's mournful roll
Had left its record on my soul,
And traced in lines of darkness there
The picture of its great despair."
— *Whittier, Ezekiel.*

VI. **The Watchman on the Walls.** — Vs. 12–21. FROM TRANCE TO ACTION. Verses 12–15 describe the coming out of the trance, like Peter on the housetop when he went down to the messengers of Cornelius. **And I went in bitterness . . . of my spirit,** either, as Cambridge Bible, "sharing with God his righteous indignation against Israel;"

16. And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

17. [1] Son of man, I have made thee [2] a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man [3] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; [4] but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20. Again, When a [5] righteous man doth turn from his [a] righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou has delivered thy soul.

[1] Ezek. 33: 7.
[2] Isa. 52: 8; Jer. 6: 17.
[3] Ezek. 33: 6; John 8: 21.
[4] Isa. 49: 4, 5; Acts 20: 26.
[5] Ezek. 18: 24.
[a] Heb., *righteousnesses.*

or the bitterness of having to deliver such an awful message as he uttered in the following chapters, to his friends and neighbors and countrymen. So that when he came to them, he **remained there astonished**, in a stupor of grief, **seven days.**

THE WATCHMAN'S DUTY, vs. 16–21, is clearly set forth. He must warn the people of their danger, as by the voice of God. While his business was to warn, the results were with God and the free will he has given his children.

As from a high tower, the watchman sees the whole horizon, and can see the approaching danger.

His duty is plain. The soldier on guard is worthy of death if he sleeps at his post. A whole army may be lost, a whole city may be destroyed, by the sentry's neglect.

The watchman's business is to save life. He saves others, and one result is that he saves himself. There is no greater loss to a man than to fail in his duty.

MODERN APPLICATIONS.

1. God is most earnest to save all people, even the whole world.

2. He uses every means possible of every kind to accomplish this result, always the highest, the most uplifting, when they prove effective.

3. There are persons who will not yield to the higher and nobler motives, and these persons must be warned of their danger. They cannot be compelled to be good, for the very nature of character and of goodness demands the voluntary choice of the good. Goodness cannot be forced by outward constraints. A man once asked another if he would not like to live in a place where every man was regular in his habits, was a total abstainer, worked regularly, was never out late at night. "Certainly." Well, you will find it in any well regulated state prison. But state prison is not the home of virtue, however well-behaved the inmates may be. God does, and man to succeed must, use moral forces to produce moral results.

4. God warns us in love in various ways that we may not go heedlessly on to our ruin. (1) He gives warnings in our bodies, by sicknesses, pains, and weakness, against courses that will ruin the body, and to teach us to prepare for death. (2) God gives warnings to the soul, by the pangs of conscience, by troubles and afflictions, to keep us from losing our souls. (3) He warns our country, by discontent, internal commotions, by strikes, outbreaks, anarchies, war, against the oppressions, inequalities, luxury, irreligion, injustice, which will bring final ruin unless we turn from them.

5. God's warnings are given because he loves us. We agree with Whittier when he says —

> "I know not of his hate, — I know
> His goodness and his love."

God shows his goodness, — never hate — when he warns men against their evil courses. Punishment is never so great an evil as sin. How much God wants us to be good is shown by the joy of the angels over one sinner that repenteth, by what prophets and martyrs, and more than all Jesus Christ, have suffered to save people from sin. The most awful suffering that can come to a family is caused by the child that insists on being a prodigal.

6. God calls upon pastors, teachers, parents, friends, to be faithful in warning.

7. The vision of God is our greatest means of saving others.

8. The Truth of God, the words of God, should be so read and studied, that they pervade our whole lives, saturate every part of our being. "Closer is He than breathing; nearer than hand and feet."

LESSON II. — October 8.

THE LIFE GIVING STREAM. — Ezekiel 47: 1–12.

READ Rev. 22: 1-5. COMMIT v. 9.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* — REV. 22: 17.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The great interest in irrigation, and the reclaiming of the desert lands in this country, may make an excellent introduction to this lesson. A very large amount of barren land has been changed into fruitful fields and orchards and gardens, by the living rivers from the mountains.

Palestine itself is comparatively barren, because of deforestation, and the need of water. It can never be what it was once, without a free and continued flow of living water. But it contains within its possibilities to-day all that is necessary to make it "a garden of the Lord," "a land flowing with milk and honey," far beyond anything it has realized in its most prosperous past.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The second part of the Book of Ezekiel.
What must be accomplished before the people could wisely be restored.
The valley of dry bones.
The restored service of worship.
The river of life in Ezekiel and in Revelation.
Our country's experience in irrigation.
Palestine's need.

LEARN BY HEART.

John 4: 13, 14; Rev. 22: 1, 2.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — This prophecy of the Life giving stream was written B.C. 572, "in the beginning of the year." It was near the middle of the 70 years' captivity (605–536). The earlier prophecies of this second part of Ezekiel were written 12 or 13 years before in 586, 5.

Place. — It was written at Tel-abib on the river Chebar in Babylonia, to the exiles scattered throughout that region.

Place in the History. — It belongs to the second part of Ezekiel's prophecies, the object of which was to prepare the people for their return. It was like leaven working during the 36 years before the people were fitted to begin anew in Palestine.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia.

Daniel still living as a statesman.

INDUCTIVE STUDY.

The River of Life in Rev. 22: 1–5.
The water of life in John 4 and 7.
Psalm 1; Isa. 55: 1; 12: 3.
Num. 20: 8–11, compared with 1 Cor. 10: 4.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Way to Better Times.

INTRODUCTION.

I. DAWNING RAYS OF A NEW DAY (Ezekiel 34; 36: 28–38).

II. THE HEART OF STONE CHANGED (Ezek. 36: ~~22, 28~~). 26, 27

III. THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES (Ezekiel 37).

IV. THE VISION OF RESTORED WORSHIP (Ezekiel 40–48).

V. THE RIVER OF THE WATERS OF LIFE (Ezek. 47: 1–12).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The books on Ezekiel in the last lesson. Maclaren's *Expositions of Scripture. Ezekiel*, "The River of Life," and "The Dry Bones."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Whittier's "Chapel of the Hermits," the last few stanzas. Keble's "Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple." "The Oriental Fountain" in Foster's *Cyclopedia of Poetry*, vol. 2, No. 4093. Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, "The Cloud Chariots."

(1) In our last lesson we studied the warnings by which God, through his prophet Ezekiel, would persuade Israel to so repent and return to God, that it would not be necessary to permit Jerusalem and the Temple to be destroyed.

(2) The people refused. The city was destroyed. The temple was burned, and its treasures borne away by the Chaldeans. The best of the people, those in which were the greatest possibilities of good, and the largest capacity for being trained, were sent into far distant exile, for their schooling; very much as their ancestors were disciplined and trained in the wilderness that they might be enabled to take possession of the Promised Land.

(3) As soon as it was settled that the only hope of Israel was through exile, the training began for their return.

The one essential was a change of heart, a change of character, a change of conduct, and an open mind and soul to receive the divine influences by which alone these things can be obtained.

To this work the Prophet Ezekiel now turns in the second half of his book. The problem was how this work could be done; by what means could the people be influenced.

I. **Dawning Rays of a New Day. The Promise and the Hope.** — Ezekiel 34, and 36: 28–38. (*Written in 585, soon after the exiles reached Babylon after the city and temple were destroyed.*) There was no change apparent in the condition of the exiles. Nebuchadnezzar who had brought them into captivity was still living, and was engaged in building up Babylon into the most magnificent city in the world; and he needed the forced labor of the Jews, even as Solomon used forced labor in building Jerusalem into the height of its ancient glory. The night was dark and stormy for the exiles.

Then Ezekiel pointed them to a little rift in the eastern clouds, faintly tinged with the rays of the morning. The morning star showed dimly through the mist.

They were as sheep without a shepherd. Their former rulers, whom God had placed as shepherds over his people in their own land, had proved false, and instead of leading them to the green pastures and still waters of obedience and righteousness, had done none of the things a ruler-shepherd ought to do. They killed the flock instead of feeding it. They neglected the sick. They left the flock to be torn by wild beasts. They let them be "scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them."

Now God promised them a true shepherd, who will save his flock. They shall return under his guidance to their own land, where they shall dwell in safety, where there "shall be showers of blessing," "the earth shall yield her increase," "the desolate land shall be tilled" and "become like the garden of Eden," the ruined cities shall be walled and inhabited. "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it." The new Shepherd is God, but revealed through new leaders who represent Him, with a far-distance glimpse of Christ, and the redeemed world.

Thus Ezekiel became one of "the Great Society of Encouragers." The new day was yet (when the prophecies of these chapters were written in 585), nearly 50 years in the future, but the promise and the hope and the goal were from this time before their eyes. The possibility of redemption, of a new life of blessing, of a glorious and perfect heaven, is one of the first essentials for escaping from a life of sin. The assurance of a perfect earth, of the transformation of this world into the kingdom of heaven, is strength, courage, success for those laboring for this object.

"O Golden day so long desired, Born of a darksome night,
The waiting earth at last is fired By thy resplendent light.
And hark, like Memnon's morning chord, Is heard from sea to sea
This song: One Saviour, Christ our Lord: And brethren all are we."

II. The Heart of Stone Changed to a Living Heart. — Ezek. 36: 26, 27. (*Written in 585, just after the destruction of the city and temple.*) In order to attain this hope, and realize this promise, it was absolutely necessary that they should have a change of heart. The heart in Scripture "denotes the center of man's personal activities." — *Hastings' B. D.* It is the organ of thought, the seat of the affections, and all moral impulses, of choice, and love. From a right heart flows a right life, from a wrong heart flows a wrong life. The deepest and most essential need of men is a heart that loves and chooses righteousness and God. There is no other way to eternal life here or hereafter; no other way to the kingdom of heaven on earth.

THE STONY HEART. **And I will take away the stony heart.** The heart of sin is called stony, like a rock, because (1) it is cold to God's love and goodness. (2) It is hard, not easily impressed, or moved by the divinest motives; it is selfish, and not stirred with the needs of others. (3) It is dead; there is no spiritual life in it, no source of good works and beautiful living. It is dead to God's goodness, dead to holy influences, dead to heaven. It exists in God's love, but does not realize it. It is such deadness that led the Israelites to reject God and his prophets, to listen unmoved to all appeals, and to continue in their disobedience till their "calamity came as a whirlwind," and their destruction "as an overwhelming scourge."

THE NEW HEART. **I will give you an heart of flesh,** a living heart that can feel and act. **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.** The new Spirit will be his spirit, — life like his, desires like his, a nature like his, to which a right life is as natural as apples are natural to an apple-tree, or roses to a rose-bush.

EXAMPLES. A recent book, *Twice born men. A clinic in Regeneration* gives "in a style rarely equaled, descriptions of nine cases taken from among the lowest of the low, the most desperate and degraded and altogether savage criminals who, by the power of God and in answer to prayer, mainly through the instrumentality of the Salvation Army, were instantly transformed, completely revolutionized, and remained for the rest of their lives hard working, virtuous, respectable citizens, laboring for the salvation of others, heads of happy homes, doing good and not evil all their days. They kneel at the penitent form in the depths of misery and ignominy; they rise to the heights of joy and a new, firm purpose to walk uprightly. The change is absolute and entire and instantaneous. From being loafers who had never done a single day's work, they became straightway industrious laborers. From being basely and utterly selfish, they become most considerate for others. From cruelty they pass to gentleness, from horrible vice to purity. Nothing which we have ever read gives so clear and striking an impression of the tremendous power of religion."

In most persons brought up among religious influences the change is made by such small choices that they are unconscious of any definite time of change. It is like a ship swinging around in so large a circle that one would not realize the moment when it ceased sailing toward the east and began plowing its way to the west. On the other hand the men referred to above made a sudden, sharp turn. In one moment as it were the direction of their lives was changed. It was the *beginning* of a complete change of character. They were not made perfect characters in an instant. But they *began* a new life.

ILLUSTRATION. "An old story runs to the effect that once there were two cities connected by a long road that ran part of the way through a mountainous country. At a sharp turn in this road there was a dangerous precipice, so abrupt that many travelers fell over it and were badly hurt on the rocks below. So many came to grief there that a hospital was built on the spot, to provide curative treatment for the injured pedestrians. This thing went on for some time, until one day some one bethought himself to build a wall at the top of the precipice — whereupon the hospital soon went to ruin through want of use.

"The moral of this story as applied to modern conditions is obvious: It is better to build the wall than to maintain the hospital." — *Zion's Herald.* It is better to bring men to Christ while young, than to try to get them out of the pit of evil. New hearts in all men would save them from nearly all the misery in the world and would abolish the larger part of the expense of government.

III. The Valley of Dry Bones; and the Resurrection to Life. The Proof of the Divine Power to Save. — Ezekiel 37. (*Written 585, just after the destruction of the city and temple.*) THE FIRST PART OF THE VISION. Ezekiel in a vision was carried

1. Afterward (And) he brought me again (back) unto the door of the house; and behold,
[1] waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for
the forefront of the house stood toward (was toward) the east, and the waters came down
from under, from the right side of the house, at (on) the south side (side) of the altar.

[1] Joel 3: 18; Zech. 13: 1.

to a valley which was full of human bones, very many and very dry. They were an emblem of the Jewish nation in exile. They expressed the despair and hopelessness of the captives. A renewal of their nation seemed as hopeless as the bringing to life of those who had long been dead. There was not a sign of hope in the political sky. There was not a ray of hope in any of their circumstances.

THE SECOND PART of the vision shows in a most vivid manner the power of God to revive the nation. The vision is very dramatic in form.

The Lord: "Son of man, can these bones live?"

The Prophet: "O Lord God thou knowest."

The Lord: "Prophesy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, ye shall live."

So Ezekiel prophesied, and the bones came together in their places and the flesh clothed them, but there was no breath.

The Lord: "Prophesy unto the wind: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

The Prophet prophesied, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

The Lord: "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it* and performed *it*."

The Lord speaks to us by this vision. Where there is a dead heart, a dead church, a dead cause, a dead Sunday school, a dead truth, a discouraged teacher or reformer,—if the cause be the Lord's, then let all take courage, for the dry bones shall move, the flesh shall return, the breath of the Spirit of God shall come from the four winds, and the dead shall live. The history of the world shows that in some form, with some body, there is a resurrection.

IV. **Vision of Restored Worship.**—Ezekiel 40–48. (*Written B.C. 572, twelve years after the previous prophecies referred to in this lesson.*) The earlier visions and prophecies of the second part of Ezekiel's book were written or spoken soon after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. But the exiles which came to Babylonia in the great deportation of 597, had been already settled in their foreign home for eleven years.

For the next twelve years, 585–572, Ezekiel had doubtless been their statesman, and shepherd and prophet-priest, and the visions of hope and return, of new hearts, and new life had been doing their work. Now, about the middle of the exile, 35 years yet before the Return, Ezekiel urges the people to another step in their training, by means of his vision of the Temple and its services of worship. It is not a plan to be exactly followed in their return, but an exposition of the true principles.

A home of worship, a temple or church, hours of Bible study and worship, sacred days, some forms of service or ritual, persons set apart for religious teaching,—are essential to the cultivation of religion and the progress of the truth. These forms and aids must indeed be filled with the spirit. They that worship God "must worship him in spirit and in truth." The spirit must be expressed in some form, and the form helps the spirit. Open eyes, unbowed heads in church hinder the spirit of worship. He that has no set times for prayer, no sacred Sabbaths, no prayermeetings, no family worship, no times for Bible reading, will find his spiritual force declining.

Hence these visions of Ezekiel. And in fact, there grew up among the exiles, religious organizations, synagogues, schools, sabbath keeping,—which prepared them for their Return, and their restoration as the visible people of God. The Temple was the symbol of God's permanent presence. "The glory of the Lord came into the house." "The glory of the Lord filled the house" (Ezek. 43: 5), and "his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory" (Ezek. 43: 2). "And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst

2. Then brought he me out (of) by the way of the gate northward, and led me (about) round by the way without unto the (utter) outer gate, by the way (of the gate) that looketh (eastward; toward the east;) and behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3. (And when) When [1] the man (that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, went forth eastward with the line in his hand,) he measured a thousand cubits, and he (brought) caused me (to pass) through the waters; (the waters were that were) the waters to the (ancles.) ankles.

4. Again he measured a thousand, and (brought) caused me (to pass) through the waters; (the waters were that were) the waters to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and (brought) caused me (to pass) through; (the waters,) the waters were that were to the loins.

5. Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not pass (over; through;) for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed (over.) through.

6. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this*? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the (brink) bank of the river.

[1] Ezek. 40: 3.

of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile" (Ezek. 43: 7).

V. **The River of the Waters of Life.** — Vs. 1–12. One thing only was wanting, the waters of eternal life, the Holy Spirit, in each one who receives, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. It is the stream of salvation, widening into the Gospel, flowing through the centuries.

1. THE SOURCE OF THE STREAM. 1. The **waters issued out from under the threshold of the house**, the temple, **eastward.** On this side of the Jerusalem temple there is a valley which leads to the Dead Sea. The healing waters, "a soft flowing stream, regarded as a symbol of the silent and unobtrusive influence of the divine presence in Israel (Isa. 8: 6)," came from God, through his sanctuary, the source of all good, all power for salvation. So six centuries later the powers which have changed the world, the widened stream of salvation, came from the risen Saviour in heaven, and from the Holy Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION FROM PALESTINE. "It cannot be useless to insist upon a clear understanding of the relative positions of the threshold from below which the waters proceed forth, and the Dead Sea which is to be healed thereby. The source of these healing waters is about twenty-six hundred feet above, and the surface of the Salt Sea is thirteen hundred feet below, the Mediterranean. Thus in the course of twenty miles, being the distance from the threshold to the Dead Sea, the descent is thirty-nine hundred feet, greatly facilitating the flow of these healing waters in their course down to the scene of their gracious work." — *Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie* in *Sunday School Times.*

2. THE BROADENING STREAM. The beginning was very small and obscure. The people would scarcely notice it at all.

3. **A thousand cubits.** There is no special significance in this exact distance, but only in the fact that gradually the river broadened and deepened as it flowed toward the Dead Sea. **The waters were to the ancles,** even after so long a flow the stream was very shallow. But it widened and deepened **to the knees . . . to the loins** till it became **waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.** The picture of a broadening stream symbolized that while the renewal of the kingdom of Israel, on the return from exile, would have a small and insignificant beginning, both in numbers and in prosperity, the spirit that would make it a great kingdom would increase on and on to the end, the outward blessings would become more abundant, the true life of the nation would deepen as well as broaden. This picture has been realized in history. The return was signalized by a truer spirit of worship, by stronger principles of righteousness, by renewed study of the Bible. The outward progress was slow, but through Christ the kingdom of God, then represented by the Jewish kingdom, has become a mighty river.

This is true of the individual Christian, just so far as he is willing to receive the living waters of the Holy Spirit. Even an Amazon flood cannot pour all its waters through a narrow crevice. There must be open hearts in order to receive the fulness of blessing.

WATERS TO SWIM IN. Dr. Louis Albert Banks in the *Sunday School Times*, tells us of a Christian he once knew, who seemed to have a very meager religious life while strictly moral. Meeting him several years later Dr. Banks says: "I was amazed and delighted at

7. Now when I had returned, behold, at upon the [a] bank of the river were were very many [1] trees on the one side and on the other.

8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out forth toward the east eastern country, region, and shall go down into the desert Ar'a-bah; and they shall go into toward the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, into the sea shall the waters go which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed.

9. And it shall come to pass, that that every thing that liveth, living creature, which moveth, swarmeth, whithersoever place whither the [b] rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; because for these waters shall are come thither: for they and the waters of the sea shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither whithersoever the river cometh.

10. And it shall come to pass, that the that fishers shall stand upon by it, from En-gĕ'dī even unto En-eg'la-ĭm; they shall be a place to spread forth place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be according to after their kinds, as the fish [2] of the great sea, exceeding many.

11. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt.

[1] V. 12.
[2] Num. 34: 6; Ezek. 48: 28.

a Heb., *lip.*
b Heb., *two rivers.*

the change in my former acquaintance. He was not only a much older man, but evidently much happier, and his greatest happiness was in the very things which had not seemed to interest him when I had first known him. I remarked to him on the change. I have never forgotten his reply: 'Oh, I did not know what religion was then. I lived a sort of skimped and half-starved religion, but I have found the better way. My religion is no longer a side show to my life. It is the main thing. I *fairly swim in it, day and night*, and I am infinitely happier.'"

The Gospel river has become the mightiest stream of influence in the world; and all the blessings of the river Ezekiel saw have been multiplied in degree, and in extent ten thousand times. "Where the vanguard rests to-day the rear will camp to-morrow."

> "The tasks, the joy of earth, the same in heaven will be;
> Only the little brook has widened to the sea."

3. MAKING SWEET THE BITTER WATERS OF THE DEAD SEA. 7. **The very many trees** on each bank showed the life giving power of the river. 8. **Go down into the desert . . . into the sea**, the Dead Sea. The desert and the Dead Sea represent the condition of the exiles; and of the world without God and his Son Jesus Christ. This new river will change the desert into the Garden of Eden. **The waters shall be healed**, made to bring life and refreshing instead of barrenness and death.

ILLUSTRATION. One of the "twelve labors of Hercules" was to cleanse the stables of Augeas the king of Elis in Greece, where 3,000 cattle had been kept. He performed the task in one day by turning the rivers Alpheus and Peneus into the yard. Luther somewhere has a parable to the effect that the way to clean out a cowshed is not to take barrows and spades, but to turn the Elbe into it. "It is the inflowing of a divine flood that sweeps out man's evil."

4. THE RIVER BRINGS LIFE, wherever its waters flow. The Dead Sea, wherein "it is impossible for any form of life to flourish, not even salt-water fish," it fills with fish as many and great as in the Mediterranean itself. It heals the heavy, sulphurous waters and they are filled with living things.

So the new life that God was bringing to the exiles, would change all their discouragements and hardness of heart, their tendencies to sin and idolatry, all their heathen surroundings and influences which had deadened their consciences and darkened their hopes into despair, — all this deadness into life and love and hope and obedience, into new energy and activity of all the fruits of the Spirit.

So the Gospel transforms the deadness of the sinful heart, into the fulness of spiritual blessing and activity in righteousness. In the words of Maclaren: "'Every thing shall live whithersoever the river cometh' — let the quickening effects of the entrance of the gospel into the Dead Sea of stagnant and rotting heathendom be our comment on that jubilant prophecy."

12. And [1] by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow (all trees / every tree) for meat, [2] whose leaf shall not (fade, / wither,) neither shall the fruit thereof (be consumed: / fail:) it shall bring forth [a] new fruit (according to his months, / every month,) because (their / the) waters (they issued / thereof issue) out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for [3] (medicine. / healing.)

[1] V. 7. [2] Job 8: 16; Psa. 1: 3. [3] Rev. 22: 2. *a* Or, *first-fruits*.

5. THE BANKS OF THE RIVER abound in trees **whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: . . . new fruit every month** (V. 12, R.V.). Like the tree of life in Revelation. That these fruits refer to the secondary blessings of life, the "daily bread" of the Lord's prayer, is shown by the statement, **and the fruit thereof shall be for meat,** food, **and the leaf thereof for healing.**

This expresses the truth that in a community outward prosperity so far as it is really good, increases with the degree that the Gospel has transformed the spiritual nature. Churches, schools, hospitals, libraries, better homes, healthier surroundings, comforts, travel, conveniences for happiness and health, always spring up and flourish more and more as the Gospel's spiritual power widens and deepens.

ILLUSTRATION. On the cover of one of his books Ingersoll placed three crosses and under them the legend, "For the glory of God"; and three telegraph poles with their cross-bars, which bore a resemblance to crosses, and under them the legend, "For the good of man." But without the crosses there would have been no telegraph poles. All the blessings of civilization are from the trees that grow upon the banks of the river of life.

ILLUSTRATION. "I have read somewhere of Moffatt and Livingstone sitting on a hillside in Africa overlooking jungle and plain, picturing to one another meadows and green fields, prosperous homes, with white church spires and schoolhouses. These two men and many others gave their lives to work such transformations, and their visions are already becoming real." — *Dr. A. E. Dunning.*

"Rejoice, rejoice, the promised time is coming,
Rejoice, rejoice, the wilderness shall bloom,
And Zion's children then shall sing,
'The deserts all are blossoming. . . The wilderness shall bloom,'
And every creature, bond or free, Shall hail the glorious Jubilee."

LESSON III. — October 15.

THE RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY.

Ezra 1: 1–11; 2: 64–70.

PRINT 1: 1-11. COMMIT 1: 8, 4. READ Ezra 1, 2.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy.***— MIC. 7: 18.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

When I look out of my study windows I can see a number of groups of large trees, 50 to 60 feet high, each group of 2, 3, 4 or 5 trees growing out of a single stump. Originally there was in each place one large tree. Years ago those single trees were cut down, each leaving only a stump, seemingly dead throughout the cold winter; but as spring drew near, and the warm rays of the sun fell on the stump, and the gentle breezes blew, there sprang up several little shoots from the barren stump. These grew larger and larger, till they became great trees, and from each one cut down came much larger growth than the original tree. (The teacher can weave in the fuller description on page 296.)

Now in the lessons we have lately been studying we have seen the Jewish nation cut down, leaving only, as it were, the barren stump; and the coming of the springtime. Now we are to watch the new shoots springing up from the old stump; the new life begun, to grow into a mighty tree like that of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psalm 126; Isa. 40: 28–31.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Cyrus takes Babylon 539,8.
His decree of Return 538,7.
First Return, under Zerubbabel, 537,6.

Place. — Babylon and vicinity. Jerusalem. And the long journey between.

Rulers. — *Cyrus* was king of Babylon, and a large part of the East. *Zerubbabel* called also Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1: 8; 2: 2) from Babylon became the ruler of Jerusalem.

Monuments. — On stone tablets and cylinders, are written records of these days.

The Cyrus Cylinder, found at Babylon in 1879, now in British Museum.

The Nabonidus cylinders, in British Museum.

Annalistic tablet of Cyrus, a proclamation by him, written shortly after his conquest of Babylon.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Repentant Exiles Returning Home.

THE BOOK OF EZRA.

I. THE PROPHETIC HOUR FOR THE RETURN HAD STRUCK (v. 1).
II. THE DISCIPLINE OF THE EXILE HAS ACCOMPLISHED ITS PURPOSE.
III. THE PROVIDENTIAL MOVEMENTS OF HISTORY OPEN THE WAY (vs. 1, 2).
IV. THE SUMMONS TO RETURN (vs. 2–4).
V. PREPARATIONS FOR THE RETURN (vs. 5–11).
VI. THE TEDIOUS BUT TRIUMPHAL JOURNEY HOME.

LESSONS.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Cyrus king of Babylonia and the East.
Prophecies of the Return.
Spiritual preparations during the exile.
Political changes that made the Return possible.
The signs of Divine Providence.
The exiles who returned; were the exiles of the ten tribes united with those of Judea (Ezek. 37: 15–28)?

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Prof. George Adam Smith's Summary in the *Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets* is admirable. Hunter's *After the Exile*, pp. 1–49. *Ezra* in the Cambridge Bible, the Expositor's Bible and Canon Cook's *Bible Commentary*. Professor Kent's *History of the Jewish People*. Professor Sayce on *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*, and his *Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 537–554. Pinches' *Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records*, "Life at Babylon during the Captivity."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Herodotus, vol. 1, on Cyrus and Babylon is very interesting. Mrs. Browning's *Poems* "The Drama of Exile." Whittier's "The Reformer."

LESSON IN ART.

Return of Jews from Captivity, by an unknown artist.* *Praying for the Messiah*, Crimani Breviary.* *Weeping over the Ruined City*, by an unknown artist.* *Cyrus Restoring Vessels in Temple*, Doré.

The Book of Ezra. — *The author*, Ezra, will be considered in connection with his work in Lesson VIII.

Language. Like the book of Daniel, the book of Ezra is written in two languages, both of which were at that time familiar to the Jews. The main portion is written in Hebrew; but chapters 4: 8 to 6: 18 and 7: 12–26 are in Aramaic (Syriac). This change is natural, since these chapters are chiefly taken up with documents and letters which must have been originally written in that tongue.

Sections. The book consists of *two distinct sections*. The first six chapters cover a period of twenty years, 536–516, and is a compilation from documents written more than half a century before Ezra's appearance in history. Between chapters 6 and 7 intervenes a period of fifty-eight years. Chapters 7 to 11 are the personal memoirs of Ezra himself.

Extent of the history is about 80 years, B.C. 537–457.

Date. It is generally regarded by scholars that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were compiled in their present form about B.C. 330.

I. The Prophetic Hour for the Return Had Struck. — V. 1. Thirty-five years have passed since our last lesson, and the training and encouragement of Ezekiel. 1. **That the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled.** (See

1. Now in the first year of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, that the word of the LORD [1] by the mouth of Jĕr-e-mi'ah might be fulfilled, accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, [2] that he [a] made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

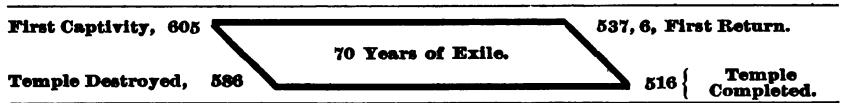
[1] 2 Chron. 36: 22, 23; Jer. 25: 12; 29: 10. [2] Ezra 5: 13, 14. [a] Heb., *caused a voice to pass.*

Jer. 25: 12; 29: 10.) This word three times repeated was that after seventy years the Lord would bring his people back again to Palestine. There were three eras of captivity, as there were several eras of return.

THE FIRST CAPTIVITY was by Nebuchadnezzar, B.C. 605, 4, when Daniel and his friends were carried captive (Dan. 1: 1–6). Seventy years from this brings us to B.C. 536, the time of the completion of the return described in this lesson.

SECOND CAPTIVITY (B.C. 597). Nebuchadnezzar again captured the city, sent a great amount of treasures from the palace and the temple to Babylon, with ten thousand of the more important of the people (2 Kings 24: 10–16). Among these were the prophet *Ezekiel* (Ezek. 1: 1, 2), and the great-grandfather of *Mordecai*, Queen Esther's cousin (Esth. 2: 5, 6).

THE THIRD CAPTIVITY was also by Nebuchadnezzar, who, after a siege of a year and a half, in July, 586, completely destroyed the city and the temple. Seventy years from this time brings us to the completion of the temple, March, B.C. 515. **Might be fulfilled.** Accomplished. He who inspired the prophecy directed its accomplishment. Many commentaries count only from the second captivity in 597, and thus make the period of exile only about 60 years. But Jeremiah himself counts his "70 years'" from the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege and the first carrying of captives to Babylon.



1. Jeremiah foretells not only the fact but gives the date.

2. Ezekiel, as we have seen, sets forth the promise of return, in many ways, by words, by symbols, by acted parables, by visions.

3. Isaiah in chapters 9 and 11 shows us the Triumphant Redeemer. The second part of the book of Isaiah is full of the most glorious promises that can be imagined; and Cyrus who permits the return, is even called by name.

4. There is an interesting prophecy expressed by a fact of nature which is not so commonly known. Ezekiel compares Assyria (Ezek. 31: 3–11) to a mighty cedar of Lebanon towering above all the trees of the forest, and declares that it shall be cut down like a cedar. The point of this prophecy lies in the fact that the cedar, although "the grandest of the daughters of the forest," yet when once cut down, never springs up again. The illustration was familiar to the ancients, for Herodotus tells the story that Crœsus, king of Lydia, threatened the men of Lampsacus that he would destroy them like a pine tree unless they released Miltiades; and that the threat perplexed them till they were reminded that a pine once cut down never springs up again. On the other hand Judah with city and temple destroyed and her people scattered was like the stump of the vine, or chestnut or oak, from which new shoots spring and grow larger than the original tree or vine. In contrast with the monarch of Lebanon cut down never to rise again, we see the lowly vine of Judah, from which, though now pruned down to the very root, shall spring a vigorous branch. Its whole value depended upon its being cut back, "pruned that it may bear more fruit." "In the Holy Land," according to Canon Tristram, "the vine is not even trellised as in Italy.

Every year the whole of the young wood is cut back to the stump, which alone remains, and is said to remain and to throw out vigorous branches for successive centuries, without any renewing of the plant." Thus Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled: "And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."

II. **The Discipline of the Exile Has Accomplished Its Purpose** so far that it is wise and safe to permit a large number to return, and renew the ancient nation. It would be useless to bring back to Judea people who would commit the same sins which made the Exile necessary, and who had not learned to some extent the lessons which their hard discipline was sent to teach.

1. The power of idolatry was forever broken. They never again yielded to its fascinations.

2. They were taught to set a new value on the filling of all the forms of worship with the spirit of religion. God had allowed even the city which was the type of heaven, and the most glorious temple dedicated to his worship, to be destroyed when these became a substitute for true religion instead of an aid to it.

3. They were also taught, by their absence, the value and necessity of religious institutions, of the means of worship, of the Sabbath day.

4. It led to renewed study of the sacred Scriptures. The exile was the period in which the guardianship, transcription, and study of the written Scriptures became the special care of a distinct class, afterwards famous as the great order of the Scribes. It led, also, to the establishment of the synagogue for social worship and reading of the Scriptures, with its accompanying schools. To this period and that of the return belong the authorship of some of the noblest and highest religious literature.

5. The outward pressure compelled the people to stand together, to keep within the walls of their religious life all they could. "The Jews now constitute themselves into a Church. The chief concern of their leaders is to develop their religious life and character. The charm of these times is to be found in the great spiritual awakening that inspires and shapes their history. This epoch was to Israel what Pentecost became to the Christians. The policy of exclusiveness saved Judaism. At heart this is just an application — though a very harsh and formal application — of the principle of separation from the world, which Christ and his apostles enjoined on the church, and the neglect of which has sometimes nearly resulted in the disappearance of any distinctive Christian truth and life, like the disappearance of a river, that, breaking through its banks spreads itself out in lagoons and morasses, and ends by being swallowed up in the sands of the desert." — *Professor Adeney* in *Expositor's Bible*.

6. The exile brought together the representatives of the divided kingdom, and made one nation where there had been two, welding the twelve tribes together like iron in a furnace. God represented this union through Ezekiel (37: 15–28) by two sticks, on one of which was written *Judah*, and on the other *The House of Israel*. These sticks were joined together, "and they shall become one in thine hand." This was done in the presence of the people, to show that the exiles of Israel carried to Babylon B.C. 722, when Samaria was destroyed, were to unite with the captives of Judah. "And I will make them one nation," "and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Thus we see that there are no "lost ten tribes" for whom there has been so much seeking. "It is cross-fertilization and not grafting which has given us our richest varieties of fruits and flowers."

7. Contact with the great world extended the views and enlarged the sympathies of the nation. They came in contact with new ideas, a new literature, a new language. They could not live so exclusively as in Palestine, but each individual met the individuals of other nations. The exiles were not all in Babylon but were scattered over the whole empire. Thus the fires of their punishment purged away some of their dross. See on Lesson XIII.

We learn some of life's lessons from our burdens, our difficulties, our struggles, our sufferings. It is a pity that the Jews refused to learn their lessons in an easier way by being obedient scholars in God's other schools. For as Carlyle said, "Experience is a good teacher; but her tuition is so high."

"All grim and soiled and brown with tan
I saw a Strong one, in his wrath,
Smiting the godless shrines of man
Along his path.

"I looked; aside the dust-cloud rolled, —
The Waster seemed the Builder too;
Up-springing from the ruins Old
I saw the New.

"'Twas but the ruin of the Bad, —
The wasting of the wrong and ill;
Whate'er of good the old time had
Was living still."
— *Whittier*, in "*The Reformer*."

2. Thus saith Cy'rus king of Per'sia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath [1] charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Jū'dah.

[1] Isa. 44: 28; 45: 1, 13.

III. **The Providential Movements of History Open the Way.** — Vs. 1, 2. As the time for the return drew near there was a sudden and unexpected change in the government and policy of Babylon. Babylon had become the greatest, strongest, richest, and most magnificent city of the world.

The river Euphrates flowed through the city. Nebuchadnezzar "banked each side of the stream, raised upon the soil massive walls, and pierced them here and there with water-gates of bronze."—*Rawlinson*. He "made Babylon the strongest fortress in all the world. Even a small force of brave men could have held it for years against any force Cyrus could muster." — *Professor Rogers*. Cyrus the Persian Conqueror had been gradually approaching the city, and in 539, 8, after battles in its vicinity, entered the city without opposition, by drawing off the Euphrates into a canal and marsh, so that his soldiers could march through the bed of the river into the heart of the city and burst upon the inhabitants through its unguarded gates. (So Herodotus.)

THE POLITICAL POLICY of Cyrus was exactly the opposite of that of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. Their plan had been to deport the leading people of the nations they had conquered away from their homes, where they might have been conspirators against their captors, into the Babylonian Empire where they could be absorbed into that nation, or at least be rendered harmless. Nabonidus had gone much farther, and brought into the city of Babylon and set up in the temples there the images of the local divinities from many cities and provinces. Thus a great body of the people, other nations as well as Jews, were disaffected, ready for insurrection, deeply incensed against the government; so that they welcomed the invader Cyrus, threw open the brazen gates to him, and gave to him without a struggle the city whose defenses were an impregnable Gibraltar to all his attacks.

Cyrus, under changed conditions and with wider political experience, reversed all this. Not only Jews, but many other peoples who had been forced to settle on foreign soil, were permitted to return to their own countries, taking their gods with them. "I assembled all those nations, and I caused them to go back to their native countries," writes Cyrus on his cylinder, now in the British Museum. The Jews came under this general permission.

The plan relieved the empire of a very large number of disaffected citizens, and transformed them into friends and allies. Even those that remained in Babylonia were there voluntarily, and having adopted it as their residence, and being merchants and bankers, would be friendly and peaceful.

It is probable also that Cyrus saw in the return of the Jews another wise policy. "There existed one powerful nation, the old land of the pyramids, Egypt, which just at this time was enjoying a new lease of vigor under the long and prosperous reign of Amasis." Between Babylon and Egypt in the route through the narrow valley over which the armies of both Babylonia and Egypt had often marched, and where they had fought many a battle, lay the land of Palestine and its fortress city which had never been captured save when its inhabitants had disagreed among themselves. "It lay in the logic of facts and circumstances that sooner or later hostilities between the two neighboring powers should break out." — *Professor Cornill*. Hence Cyrus would naturally build up in Palestine the ancient fortress, which he could make a center of offensive or defensive campaigns against Egypt. Even though the little nation of the returned exiles could give small help to a Babylonian army, they at least made a rendezvous for them, and prevented Egypt from occupying the site.

Again Cyrus was not only a man of rare sagacity, but one of "singular elevation: gracious, clement and just, treating men as men, and not as mere tools to be used and cast aside, a conqueror of quite a different type from any the world had yet seen. Plutarch declares that 'in wisdom, virtue, and magnanimity he seems to have surpassed all kings.'"

GOD IN THE MOVEMENTS OF HISTORY. 1. **In the first year of Cyrus,** B.C. 538. The proclamation would be some time during this year. The end of the exile would be a year or so later on the arrival of the exiles in Jerusalem. Many months would be required for preparations and travel.

The LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. God was in the whole movement. He never leaves this world to run itself alone. As a personal God he puts his guiding personality into individual and national history.

3. Who *is there* Whosoever there is among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* is in Jū'dah, and build the house of the LORD, the God of Israel, (1 he *is* the is God,) which *is* is in Jerusalem.

4. And whosoever remaineth is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place [a] help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* which is in Jerusalem.

1 Dan. 6: 26. *a* Heb., *lift him up.*

1. His Holy Spirit influences the spirit of man, and directly influenced Cyrus "in the realm of will and desire."

2. He influenced him by the circumstances and opportunities his providence wove around him.

3. He may have influenced him through Daniel, who was living at the time, and had just been placed in high office by the unfortunate Belshazzar.

4. Through this or some similar channel of Jewish influence Cyrus may have been made acquainted with Jeremiah's prophecies.

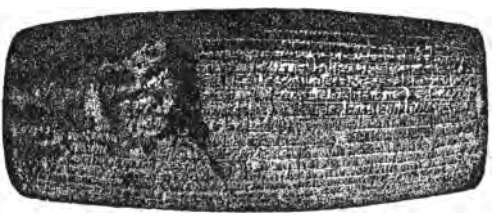
5. Josephus says that Cyrus had seen the prophecies of Isaiah, which mention him by name.

ILLUSTRATION. "It sometimes seems to me that we look upon life as one might look upon a chess-board in which the pieces played the games themselves. Now it is a knight, now it is a castle, now it is a pawn, now it is a bishop, now it is a king that moves; and why they move back and forth, and what the end of it all will be, we are puzzled to determine. But these great historians of the past saw God's hand on the chessmen, saw him moving them, and knew that at the end white would checkmate black and sweep the black off from the conquered board." — *Lyman Abbott.*

IV. **The Summons to Return.** — Vs. 2–4. **2. The LORD** (Jehovah) **God of heaven.** "The word Jehovah was probably the Hebrew translation of 'Ormuzd,' the Persian Supreme Being, 'the much-knowing or much-bestowing Spirit,' which did, in fact, approach nearly to the Jewish conception of Jehovah (see *Ancient Monarchies*, Vol. III., p. 97)." — *Cook.* It was not contrary to the usual plan and principles of Cyrus to make such a proclamation in the name of the Jews, for he treated the great deity of the Babylonians in the same way.

3. Who is there among you? The return was to be a volunteer movement, which in all respects was the best both for the purpose of Cyrus and for the new Jewish settlement. **Of all his people** throughout the vast empire.

4. Whosoever remaineth. The meaning is, whosoever is left from the captives (not whosoever remaineth at home refusing to go back to Jerusalem), a comma should be placed after **remaineth. In any place where he,** the survivor, who is desirous of going to Jerusalem, **sojourneth.** This should not be followed by a comma, but be directly connected with what follows. **Let the men of his place.** His heathen neighbors. **Help him** to raise the needed funds for his journey. "Authority is given to raise funds for two purposes: a free-will fund for the temple itself, and emigrant-aid funds for the benefit of those who may need them."— *Professor Beecher.*



Cylinder of Cyrus Found at Babylon in 1879.

Inscribed with account of his capture of the city of Babylon B.C. 539. This cylinder is barrel shape, about 9 inches long, with diameter of 3¼ inches at the end, 4⅛ inches at the middle, and contains about one hundred thousand words. — *British Museum.*

THE ADVANTAGES OF THIS METHOD OF RETURN. 1. Since it was entirely voluntary, it became a method of sifting out the best men for the purpose. Nebuchadnezzar had sifted the nation when he carried to Babylon the most vigorous and valorous men, whom it would have been dangerous to leave behind. Now comes a second sifting; for naturally the most religious, zealous, patriotic and vigorous persons would choose to go. "Someone has said

5. Then rose up the chief heads of the fathers fathers' houses of Jū'dah and Bĕn'ja-min, and the priests, and the Lĕ'vītes, with even all them whose spirit [1] God had raised stirred to go up to build the house of the LORD which is is in Jerusalem.

6. And all they that were were round about them [a] strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that that was willingly offered.

7. [2] Also Cy'rus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, [3] which Nĕb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8. Even even those did Cy'rus king of Per'sia bring forth by the hand of Mĭth're-dăth the treasurer, and numbered them unto [4] Shĕsh-băz'zar, the prince of Jū'dah.

9. And this is is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10. Thirty basons thirty bowls of gold, silver basons bowls of a second sort sort four hundred and ten, and and other vessels a thousand.

11. All the vessels of gold and of silver were were five thousand and four hundred. All these these did Shĕsh-băz'zar bring up with them of when they of [b] the captivity that were brought up from Băb'y-lon unto Jerusalem.

[1] Phil. 2: 13. [2] Ezra 5: 14; 6: 5. [3] 2 Kings 24: 13; 2 Chron. 36: 7. [4] Ezra 5: 14.

[a] That is, *helped them.* [b] Heb., *the transportation.*

that in looking for seed to plant New England, the Lord sifted two kingdoms (England and Holland) for the best they had. With equal truth it may be said that the Lord of providence, on the same wise principle, sifted the Jewish people twice over to get out the best seed for replanting the land of promise." — *Professor Cowles.* Moreover a change of place, the placing men where unusual responsibility is thrown upon them, develops unexpected powers and resources, and strength of character.

2. A great many of the best and strongest remained in Babylon for various reasons. But these were made better by the action of the volunteers, by giving largely to aid them, by a new interest in their native land, by a revived faith in the goodness and love of the God of their fathers.

3. "The captivity served as a missionary scheme to spread the knowledge of God over the world." It was an aid in preparing the world for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the spread of the gospel by the apostles. Thus there was the Promised Land, the Homeland the center of religious life, and the Dispersion as an agency in every country of the known world.

V. **Preparations for the Return.** — Vs. 5–11. **Then rose up the chief of the fathers,** better, "heads of fathers' houses" of **Judah and Benjamin,** including **Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah** (v. 8) the same as Zerubbabel of the royal line of David, and Jeshua the high priest (Ezra 3: 8), and the long list of the principal men recounted in Ezra 2.

6. **And all they that were about them,** their neighbors and friends, both Babylonians and the Jews who remained in the empire, **strengthened their hands . . . with beasts.** "Beasts of burden to help to convey the returning Jews, their goods and families. The necessity for such is very evident to all those who live or travel in Oriental countries to-day." — *Mrs. Howie of Syria.* **Precious things.** Their personal property must have amounted to considerable, for on their arrival at Jerusalem they contributed $400,000 in gold and silver for the rebuilding of the temple. They had 435 camels, 736 horses, and 6,965 beasts of burden. These were to carry the women and children, the temple treasures, and the property of the returning exiles.

7. **Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD.** "Nebuchadnezzar little thought that he was unconsciously preserving the sacred vessels of Israel in a safe and inviolable stronghold, till the day when Jehovah would bring about their restoration to his people." "Possibly some of these vessels had been on the tables at Belshazzar's feast; and possibly Cyrus was the more ready to part with them that he regarded them as unlucky property for him to keep." — *Professor Beecher.*

8. By the hand of Mithredath (given by, or dedicated to Mithra, the sun-god). He had these treasures in his charge. **Sheshbazzar.** The Persian name of Zerubbabel (born in Babylon). In Ezra 5: 16 we read that Sheshbazzar laid the foundation of the temple, while in Ezra 3: 8 the same work is ascribed to Zerubbabel.

11. All the vessels . . . were five thousand and four hundred. This is more than double the sum of the preceding numbers — 2,499. It is probable that only the larger or more costly vessels were numbered in detail, and the 5,400 includes a great number of smaller and less costly ones. So they are reckoned by Josephus (*Ant. Jud. II: 1*).

THE NUMBERS are given in Ezra 2: 64, 65, as about 50,000, of whom 42,360 were householders, and 7,337 were servants. Among them was a company of singers (Ezra 2: 65, 70). It is possible that the figures refer to heads of families, and the women and children would greatly add to the whole number. "By far the greater number, and especially those of the wealthier classes, preferred to remain behind, to hold the property which they had acquired, and pursue the avocations to which they were accustomed on a foreign but now friendly soil. It has been calculated that those who returned stood to those who stayed behind in the proportion of one to six." — *Rawlinson.*

VI. **The Tedious but Triumphal Journey Home.** — The journey home, and the whole movement may be made most real to all, and especially to children, by tracing the journey on the map. Note the great rivers to be crossed without bridges, the desert lands, the savage tribes, the countries of their old enemies, the rugged mountains to be traversed, hunger, thirst, and pain, the long weary months of travel on foot, and the desolate city and devastated homes at the end of their journey.

"They climbed the steep ascent of heaven
Through peril, toil, and pain."

"If we may trust later traditions, the setting out of the 'Captivity' for Palestine was joyous in the extreme. An escort of one thousand cavalry accompanied them, for protection against the desert Arabs, then, as now, given to plunder, and they started to the music of tabrets and flutes (Esdras 5: 2)." — *Geikie.* "Forth from the gates of Babylon they rode, to the sound of joyous music — a band of horsemen playing on flutes and tabrets, accompanied by their own two hundred minstrel slaves, and one hundred and twenty-eight singers of the temple (Ezra 2: 41, 65), responding to the Prophet's voice, as they quitted the shade of the gigantic walls and found themselves in the open desert beyond. 'Go ye out of Babylon. Flee from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Eternal hath redeemed His servant Jacob' (Isa. 48: 20, 21). It was like the procession of the Vestal Virgins, with the sacred fire in their hands, in their retreat from Rome; like Æneas with his household gods from Troy." — *Stanley.* The few rich among them indulged in the luxury of horses, or of mules. The aged, the children, and the delicate women rode on camels. Ten leaders, under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, twelve in all, perhaps in touching allusion to the original number of the Tribes, marshaled the host in as many divisions. Even the rank and file were descended from the flower of the nation. "The burst of joy was such as has no parallel in the sacred volume; it is, indeed, the Revival, the Second Birth, the Second Exodus of the nation." — *Stanley.*

From an Old Print.

Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

The second part of Isaiah 40–66 will receive new meaning when read in connection with this return, — its warnings, its hopes, its exhortations, its visions.

Some of the "Songs of the Ascents" (Psalm 120–134), a little book of songs incorpo-

rated into the last of the five books of the Psalter and used by the pilgrims in Palestine on their pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the annual feasts, have vivid references to the return, especially Psalm 126.

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,
We were like them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
The LORD hath done great things for them.
The LORD hath done great things for us;
Whereof we are glad."

THE HEART OF THE LESSON FOR TO-DAY.

1. Each individual is a microcosm, a miniature edition of the great world; and God's dealings in the larger movements, applies in its degree to each one of us.

2. For all who have gone into the captivity of sin, there is a call to repent and return to the Father's house. A book has lately been published giving the stories of *Twice-born men*.

3. The trials and sorrows and pains in the service of sin are meant to make us weary of that service and lead us to repent and return to God. Some one writes: "If it were not for the Slough of Despond and other hindrances by the way, the kingdom of heaven might be full of persons unqualified for citizenship therein."

4. At the same time we must remember that the mud bath of sin is not the way to heaven, the rioting and waste of the prodigal is not on the road to his Father's house. The sins that led to the exile were not a fall upward. The fall into sin is never a fall upward. The man who throws away the "gold, silver and precious stones of life" for the "wood, hay and stubble," may be saved, but "so as by fire," a fire that burns up the little gains of sin.

5. There is great joy in returning from captivity of sin, not only the joy of the returning wanderer, but the joy of the angels who know how great beyond conception is the blessing of the return.

LESSON IV. — October 22.

FOUNDATION OF SECOND TEMPLE LAID.

Ezra 3: 1—4: 5.

PRINT 3: 8—4: 5. COMMIT 3: 11. READ Ezra 4, 5 and 6.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.*** — PSA. 100: 4.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The lesson to-day on the new start in life by a nation, runs parallel with the new start in the Christian life of the church, and of the individual.

The lesson may be made both interesting and impressive to the younger scholars, by having them study the lesson with this thought in view; and by parallel columns on the blackboard, or papers written by themselves, show, from their own experience, how the steps in the progress of the nation throw light upon their own life and growth. The call, the preparation, the hard journey begun with joy, the religious life and helps to worship, laying the foundations, the long opposition, the new call, working with all their might, aiding the church, building up the kingdom of God.

For classes of those mature enough, each one of Zechariah's visions might be assigned to a scholar, who in the class should report the story of the vision, and show what helps it brings to us in the Christian life.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The arrival at Jerusalem, B.C. 537.
Foundation of the Temple, B.C. 536.
Delays, B.C. 535–520.
Building of Temple begun, B.C. 520.
Temple completed, B.C. 516.
Period of the lesson, 20 years.
Place. — Jerusalem and vicinity.
Prophets. — Haggai, B.C. 520.
Zechariah, B.C. 520–518.
Daniel the aged (Dan. 10: 1).
Rulers. — Cyrus king till B.C. 529.
Cambyses king B.C. 530–522.
Darius king B.C. 521–486.
Zerubbabel governor of Judea.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psa. 84: 1, 2, 4, 10; Gen. 28: 17.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Artăxerx'ēs; A'săph; Cămby'sēs; Dărī'ŭs; E'săr-hăd'dŏn; Hăg'gāi; Hĕn'ădăd; Hystās'pēs; Jĕsh'ŭă; Jŏz'ădăk; Kăd'mĭĕl; Lĕb'ănŏn; Shĕăl'tĭĕl; Tăt'nāi; Tĭsh'rī; Zĕrŭb'băbĕl; Zĕchărī'ăh.

ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The condition of Jerusalem when the Exiles arrived.
Why religious services before the Temple was built.
The differing views of the old and the young.
Occasion of the long discouraging delay.
The prophet Haggai.
The prophet Zechariah and his visions.
The need of the Temple.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Entering upon a New Religious Life.

I. THE NEW EPOCH.

II. GETTING SETTLED IN THE OLD HOME.

III. RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS SERVICES (vs. 2-7).

IV. FOUNDATIONS OF THE TEMPLE LAID (vs. 8-13).

V. BITTER OPPOSITION CAUSES 15 YEARS' DELAY (Ezra 4: 1-5).

VI. THE TEMPLE COMPLETED (Ezra 5, 6).

THE SCRIPTURES NECESSARY TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF THIS LESSON.

Ezra 4—6.
Haggai 1—12.
Zechariah 1—8.
Psalms 84, 87, 122—126, 130.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The Books on Ezra in our last lesson. The Behistun inscription in Professor Price's *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, and Professor Pinches' *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records*. Geo. Adam Smith's *Book of the Twelve* on Haggai and Zechariah. There are several very interesting interpretations of Zechariah in Professor Dods' *Visions of a Prophet*. Especially good, also, is the chapter on Zechariah in Professor Elmslie's *Expository Lectures*. *The Prophet of Glory, or, Zechariah's Visions*, by J. Denham Smith. Meyer's *Zechariah the Prophet of Hope*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Whittier's *Poems*, "Our State." *The Book of Esdras* in the *Apocrypha* is "an admirable piece of fiction" concerning Zerubbabel before Darius. *Herodotus* gives us information concerning Darius. *Poems*, by Francis Hodgson, "When the Second Temple's Height."

LESSON IN ART.

Rebuilding the Temple, by an unknown artist* and by Doré.

I. The New Epoch. The Story of the First Twenty Years. — From the Return from Exile to the Completion of the new Temple.

1. The Decree of Cyrus permitting the exiles to return. Some time in his first year,	B.C. 538
2. Preparations for the Return. Several months at least, in order to settle up their affairs, and assemble at Babylon.	
3. The Exiles Depart leaving Babylon. Soon after the close of the rainy and cold season, which occurs in November and December.	Jan. or Feb. B.C. 537
4. The Journey Home would require 5 or 6 months; Ezra (7 : 10) was exactly 4 months, with a small select company. The first journey with its larger numbers and many incumbrances would require more time.	
5. Arrival at Jerusalem. Some time in	May or June, B.C. 537
6. Getting Settled in their homes and farms, 4 months, June to October 1.	
7. Altar Set Up. Worship Begun. Feast of Tabernacles. Seventh month.	October, B.C. 537
8. Foundations of the Temple Begun.	May, B.C. 536
9. Foundation Laid. Great Celebration. How far the work had gone is uncertain, but it must have made considerable progress in order to have made so clear the difference between this Temple and Solomon's.	Probably B.C. 535

10. Bitter Opposition. The Work Delayed for Fifteen Years. The opposition came from the Samaritans. Cyrus died B.C. 529. His son Cambyses reigned 7 years till B.C. 522, and was of such a character that he would naturally oppose the Jews. Darius became king in 521. Ezra 4: 6–23 is an episode showing how the opposition of this time was repeated again and again. The narrative of this era is taken up again in Ezra 4: 24. B.C. 535–520

11. The Work on the Temple Renewed. In the second year of *Darius Hystaspes*, the new emperor. B.C. 520

12. Inspired by Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai in four messages, urging the people to go on with the Temple. Sept. 20–Dec. 518

13. The Temple Completed in four years. B.C. 516

II. **Getting Settled in Their Old Home.**—The exiles found Jerusalem in ruins, together with the surrounding cities of residence and their orchards and farms, much as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar's armies fifty years before. "Trees were growing wild on the Mountain of the House, and the jackals prowled among heaps of shattered masonry. Crumbling stone-work and charred timbers marked the site of palaces and towers, and choked the streets. The city walls and gates were leveled with the ground."—*Hunter*. The first business of the returned exiles was, of course, to provide some kind of dwellings for themselves and their families. They accordingly settled in the small cities surrounding Jerusalem, perhaps repairing the houses and walls that had been ruined by the besieging armies years before, or contenting themselves with huts or tents. The territory they controlled was, of course, small, and hemmed in on all sides, including "only Bethlehem on the south, while on the north their territory measured no more than twenty-five miles in length by twenty in breadth," and even upon this encroached the heathen or mongrel population.

III. **Renewal of Religious Services.**—Vs. 2–7. As soon as the returned exiles had become settled in their homes, and had planned for the necessities of life, within three or four months of their arrival, they wisely arranged for the religious life which was the very heart of the nation's existence, and the central motive and inspiration of the Return. It would require years to build the Temple. It was not wise to wait for that. It was essential that all needful helps to devotion and religion and righteousness should be provided immediately, to sustain them in the work to be done amid opposition and temptations which were to try their souls as gold is tried in the fire.

Carlyle says that "in every sense, a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him. A man's, or a nation of men's. If you tell me what that is, you tell me, to a very great extent, what the man is, what the kind of things he will do."—*Heroes and Hero-Worship*, p. 2. So Whittier sings:—

"Nor heeds the sceptic's puny hands,
While near the school the church-spire stands;
Nor fears the blinded bigot's rule
While near the church-spire stands the school."

FOR THIS PURPOSE they did four things:

1. An altar of burnt sacrifices was built on the old foundations, the highest crag of Mount Moriah, the central height of the Temple, over which, to-day, stands the well-known "Dome of the Rock." "This rude, square structure of unhewn stone was the most elevated and conspicuous object in the Temple. The altar was to Judaism what the cross is to Christianity."—*Professor Adeney*.

2. Henceforth morning and evening the sacrificial fires ascended before all the people, an aid to worship, to consecration, to the assurance of forgiveness, to prayer and communion with God. These continued till the types were fulfilled in Christ.

3. They began to celebrate the great annual religious festivals, which unified the nation, and were an essential element of the national life. The Feast of Tabernacles, the great national thanksgiving day, belonged to this season of the year, and, doubtless, was celebrated, as in later days, with waving torches, with bands of music, with singing of hymns and songs of praise. The rejoicing was so great that the Rabbis used to say that he who had never been present at the ceremonies by which this feast was distinguished, did not know what rejoicing meant.

4. The other religious service was the freewill offering of money and material for the Temple and its services. Money can thus be transfigured from a piece of silver into an angel of help.

EXAMPLES. This was one secret of the power of the Puritan Pilgrims in New England. Their first work was to worship God, to build churches, and found schools.

So when food came after the terrible siege of Leyden, men who rushed first for the food over-ate and died; but the majority went first to the church, and gave thanks to God,

8. Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Ze-rŭb'ba-bĕl the son of She-ăl'tĭ-el, and Jĕsh'u-a the son of Jŏz'a-dăk, and the remnant (rest) of their brethren the priests and the Lē'vītes, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; [1] and appointed the Lē'vītes, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward (have the oversight of) the work of the house of the LORD.

9. Then stood [2] Jĕsh'u-a (with) his sons and his brethren, Kăd'mĭ-el and his sons, the sons of [a] Jū'dah, [b] together, to set forward (have the oversight of) the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Hĕn'a-dăd, (with) their sons and their brethren the Lē'vītes.

10. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, [3] they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Lē'vītes the sons of A'saph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the [4] ordinance (order) of David king of Israel.

[1] 1 Chron. 23: 24, 27.
[2] Ezra 2: 40.
[3] 1 Chron. 16: 5.
[4] 1 Chron. 6: 31.
a Or, *Hodaviah*, Ezra 2: 40.
b Heb., *as one*.

and then satisfied their hunger, and found health and strength. Then they founded a university as their thank-offering.

ILLUSTRATION. The Pilgrim Monument at Plymouth, Mass., illustrates what they believed, and what their example has taught of the true way to build up a strong and prosperous state. The Statue of Faith, 36 feet high, stands on a lofty pedestal on a hill. One hand points to heaven, and the other holds an open Bible. It is surrounded by four figures, representing Morality, Liberty, Religion, and Education. A people whose character and purposes are truly represented by these is sure to prosper.

THEIR MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY. 1. Build your new altars on the old foundations, your new forms on the old principles.

2. The family altar should be set up at the first in every family, and the service of worship should be regular day by day.

3. There is a place for these in every life and in every community. There is a power in routine, in regularly recurring services, in appointed hours of prayer. No one can safely neglect them. The psalmist says, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house."

4. The worship is far more important than the Temple or conveniences for worship. The commonest house, the poorest apparatus, the simplest forms will accomplish the purpose, provided they are the best we can obtain. Using the best we can have for church and Sunday school, proves the sincerity of our devotion and worship.

IV. **The Foundations of the Temple Laid.**—Vs. 8–13. **In the second year . . . second month.** May, B.C. 536, seven months after establishing religious services, and a year after the Return. **Zerubbabel**, the civil ruler. **Jeshua**, the high priest, the religious ruler. The two authorities united in this service. **The Levites** attended to the secular duties of the Temple worship, while the priests performed the spiritual services; as in our churches we have laymen for the secular duties, and pastors for the religious work. Both are to be consecrated men.

From twenty years old. Young men in the prime of life. **Set forward,** "have the oversight of" (R.V.) **the work.**

10. **When the builders laid the foundation of the temple,** when the foundation was finished (v. 11) at least so far as to show its size and form and quality.

THE CELEBRATION. As often with us in laying the corner stone of church or cathedral, there was a great celebration. **Priests in their apparel.** The elegant and beautiful official robes used by the priests in their celebrations, especially the blue and scarlet and purple robes, with gold and gems. (See Ex. 31: 10; 39: 27, etc.) **With trumpets.** Not for music; but, like our church-bells, for summoning assemblies and joyful announcements. **The sons of Asaph,** who was one of the great choir leaders of David's time. "The sons" were the members of the choir or singing club named after him. **After the ordinance (order) of David.** (See 1 Chron. 15: 16–22.) David first organized choirs and music for the temple services.

11. **Sang together by course,** R.V., "one to another," responsively. "The verb very probably means that the chant of praise was responded to with a great burst of chorus, vocal

11. [1] And they sang (together by course one to another) in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; [2] (because he is saying, For he is) good, [3] for his mercy *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12. [4] But many of the priests and Lē'vītes and (chief heads of the fathers, *who were* fathers' *houses*, the old) ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

13. (So as) that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

[1] Ex. 15: 21; 2 Chron. 7: 3; Neh. 12: 24.
[2] 1 Chron. 16: 34; Psa. 136: 1.
[3] 1 Chron. 16: 41; Jer. 33: 11.
[4] Hag. 2: 3.

and instrumental, the substance of which was some well-known sacred refrain. (Compare Ex. 15: 20, 21.)" — *Cambridge Bible.* **He is good,** etc. These words first appear as the doxology at the close of the psalm written by David, and sung at the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 16: 34). They are found substantially in Psa. 106, 107, 118. **And all the people shouted with a great shout.** To express with all the intenseness possible their joy.

THE USE OF MUSIC IN GOD'S SERVICE. There is a wonderful power in music and every atom of it should be used in God's service. The church has scarcely begun to use this power in its fulness. Some object to responsive singing; some have opposed putting an orchestra in the Sunday-school, as if these were modern novelties, instead of 3000 years old. These old saints used every kind of instrument, every method of singing, — solos, responses, choruses, marching songs, refrains, everything that would give wings and inspiration to the service of song.

THE EIRESIONE. There is a very remarkable passage in the Letter of *The Translators to the Reader* of the Authorized Version of 1611, seldom printed now in our Bibles, but found in some modern editions. It compares the Bible to many wonderful and beautiful things. One of them is The *Ei-rē-si-ō-nē*, "how many sweet and goodly things are hanging on it." The Eiresione was a Harvest wreath or branch of olive, hung with all sorts of autumn fruits, pastry, pots of honey, wine and oil. It was carried by a boy to the temple at a Grecian harvest festival, when offerings were made to the Sun and Hours, amid songs of praise.

There was such joy and gladness in these songs of the people. It was like Christmas songs for the coming of the Redeemer.

MINOR STRAINS IN THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS. 12. **Ancient men, that had seen the first house,** which was destroyed B.C. 586, fifty years before. They must have been sixty or seventy years old. **Wept with a loud voice.** The weeping was not because the new temple was smaller than the first, for it was larger (comp. Ezra 6: 3; 1 Kings 6: 2; 2 Chron. 3: 3, 4). They wept (1) Because of the contrast between the beauty, the magnificence, the gold and gems of the old temple, and the simplicity and poverty of the new structure (Hag. 2: 3; Zech. 4: 10). (2) Because of the absence of the old associations, the ark of the covenant, the sacred fire, and all that came to Israel through the former temple. (3) Because the past was idealized; "distance lent enchantment to the view," the golden age was in the past. And these glorified visions were compared with the realities of the present, and, as always, to the disadvantage of the real. They look upon the past as a whole, and are not annoyed with its evils and imperfections, which are hidden by the glory of the whole, as the spots on the sun, though larger than many thousands of our earths, cannot be seen on account of the splendor of the whole orb. It is very difficult to compare fairly the past with the present. (4) The new thoughts and hopes seemed to be the destruction of the old which had accomplished so much.

ON THE OTHER HAND those who had known only the exile conditions sang Hallelujahs, because (1) It was an unspeakable joy to have a temple at all. It meant the saving of the nation; it meant the returning favor of God. It was an infinite contrast to the templeless exiles and to the ruins around them. (2) It was the beginning of better things. It was a movement in the right direction. There was no limit to the religious life and the blessings

4: 1. Now when [1] the adversaries of Jū'dah and Bĕn'ja-min heard that [a] the children of the captivity builded [the] temple unto the LORD, [the] God of Israel;

2. [Then] they [came] [drew near] to Ze-rŭb'ba-bĕl, and to the [chief] [heads] of [the fathers, fathers' houses,] and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye [do] [do]; and we do sacrifice unto him [2] since the days of E'sar-hăd'don king of [As'sur] [As-syr'i-a,] which brought us up hither.

3. But Ze-rŭb'ba-bĕl, and Jĕsh'u-a, and the rest of the [chief] [heads] of [the] [fathers'] [fathers of] [houses of] Israel, said unto them, [3] Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD, [the] God of Israel, as [4] king Cy'rus the king of Per'sia hath commanded us.

[1] Vs. 7, 8, 9.
[2] V. 10; 2 Kings 17: 24; 32: 33; 19: 37.
[3] Neh. 2: 20.
[4] Ezra 1: 1, 2, 3.
[a] Heb., *the sons of the transportation.*

which could grow out of it. It made possible the greater glory, which fifteen years later the prophet Haggai foretold, when it should be fulfilled in the Messiah.

ILLUSTRATION. THE HITTITE STONE AND THE METEORS. Not many years ago in the town of Hamath in Northern Syria was discovered a sacred stone with Hittite inscriptions throwing light upon that ancient race referred to in Genesis, but for many centuries unknown to history, insomuch that many believed that the Bible story of the Hittites was legendary. This stone was with great difficulty purchased for a museum, and was being carted away to the Euphrates to be shipped, when there occurred an unusual display of November meteors. This frightened the people of Hamath; they thought that God was angry with them for selling the sacred stone, and that he was throwing the stars about in his wrath. They sent a deputation after the stone and demanded its return. The old Turk who had it in charge, after a long conference, told them that they had completely misunderstood the meaning of the falling stars; that so far from expressing God's anger, they meant, on the contrary, that God was so glad on account of their self-denial in yielding the stone to science that he was setting off fireworks in heaven for joy.

The Pessimist sees the smoke of the battle.

The Optimist sees through the smoke to the victory beyond.

The Meliorist is working so hard to overcome the evil and make the world better, that he sees even in the battle the way to victory.

V. **Bitter Opposition and Long Delay, for Fifteen Years.**—Ezra 4: 1–5. **When the adversaries of Judah.** The Samaritans, and the foreign colonists from Babylonia, Persia, and Elam (vs. 9, 10), which **Esar-haddon king of Assur** (Assyria) (v. 2), and also Sargon and Asshur-banipal had sent to Samaria (2 Kings 17: 24). Thus they had lived in Samaria 130 to 180 years. See Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, Vol. II., p. 415. **For we seek your God . . . and we do sacrifice unto him.** But they did it in a different way, partially in connection with other things which would destroy the perfection and power of the Jewish worship. They worshiped after the manner of the Northern Kingdom, by means of the two calves set up in Bethel and Dan, which worship had led them into idolatry, and destroyed the kingdom. They were adversaries from the first, and not friends changed into adversaries by wrong treatment.

WHY DID THEY WANT TO JOIN WITH THE JEWS? It would strengthen them politically and socially. It would give them the best friends and allies they could have. They imagined that the wealth and prosperity of the new comers would be an advantage. The Jews gave so liberally to the temple that probably their wealth was overestimated.

WHY DID THE JEWS REFUSE? Some writers think that the Jews made a mistake. They could indeed have united with them in whatever things were common ground, as in defence against enemies, in common work for the general good.

But in religious work and service it would have been ruin. The people were not firmly enough fixed in their principles and methods to have endured the strain. Rawlinson calls it "an heroic refusal to accept the material aid of a rich and powerful people at the risk of imperiling religious purity." "Thus was a great peril averted." "They saved a nation, for the time at any rate, from the danger of having their religion corrupted and adulterated by intermixture with a form of belief and practice which was altogether of an inferior type,

4. Then [1] the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Jū'dah, and troubled them in building,

5. And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cy'rus king of Per'sia, even until the reign of Da-rī'us king of Per'sia.

[1] Ezra 3: 3.

and to a considerable extent tainted with heathenism." — *Rawlinson*. The result would have been to deteriorate the Jews, and frustrate the religious value of the Return. The colony could not have joined with this adulterated race without destroying the possibility of the restoration of a pure and holy religion. To let all the world join the church without becoming Christians is to ruin the power of the church and prevent its good influence upon the world. To refuse to do this is not bigotry, but preservation of the church from ruin, and the loss of power for good over the others. At the same time there can be federation between those who differ in minor points; and with all kinds of men and societies in things which are common to all, as Temperance, Reform, social betterment, political policies.

THE RESULT was that **the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building** by hiring **counsellors against them** (vs. 4, 5) to stir up the Babylonian authorities to interfere, by all manner of slanders.

King Darius and Attendants.
From inscription on the rock of Behistun, Persia.

In the Book of Ezra there follow two examples of the way they interfered, by showing what took place later within the author, Ezra's personal knowledge, and before he himself went to Jerusalem in 458.

1ST EXAMPLE (v. 6) was in the time of Ahasuerus, the Greek Xerxes, in 486, the king who made Esther his queen.

2ND EXAMPLE (vs. 7-23) occurred under King Artaxerxes (465) — in whose reign Ezra himself lived. He therefore knew all about the methods of these adversaries. Ezra went to Jerusalem in the 7th year of his reign. Thus these verses are not out of place here, but are introduced to show us the kind of opposition the Jews had to endure during the fifteen years between laying the foundations of the temple and entering upon its completion. v. 5. The opposition was successful **until the reign of Darius king of Persia**, in 521.

CONDITIONS IN THE MEANTIME. We learn from Haggai that the people were busy with building beautiful houses, and cultivating their farms. They planted vineyards and orchards, figs, pomegranates and olives. But all their efforts were failures. They "looked for much, and lo it came to little." For they cared more for their own houses and farms than for the house of God. They were not energetic in overcoming the opposition. They had lost their enthusiasm.

VI. **The Temple Completed.** — Ezra 5, 6. THE NEW EMPEROR. Darius Hystaspes when he became emperor, in 521, changed the policy of his immediate predecessors, Cambyses and Gomates, and returned to the earlier statesmanship of Cyrus. This change made possible a change in the condition of things in Palestine. Ezra 5 and 6 describes this reversal of policy.

HAGGAI. Then arose the wise, aged prophet-preacher who had been watching the course of affairs, and in the name of God, urged the people to arise and build the Temple, for the time had come. He made four addresses in the autumn of 520, the summaries of which are recorded in his book. He began at the religious festival of the New Moon when crowds of people were assembled, probably (Geikie) in the Temple area itself, where the altar was smoking with sacrifices, and the unfinished foundations and the desolation of the city were in full view, while in the distance were the homes and fields of the leaders.

He urged all high motives for renewing the work, and enforced them by their own experiences. They had tried to gain prosperity, while religion was neglected. They had sought the fruits of obedience to God, while they neglected the tree that alone could bear the fruit. They wanted rich crops in their fields, while they stopped up the springs that alone could make them fertile. Haggai said to them, Look at the results of your bad policy. Consider your ways. Change your plan. Put God, and religion first. Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Then you will succeed in giving the nation true prosperity, and its place of usefulness in the world.

ZECHARIAH. While aged Haggai was urging the people to rise up and build, a younger prophet-preacher was inspired to encourage the people, and to remove their difficulties and doubts, by a series of emblematical visions, or object lessons.

1. The vision of the horses, God's messengers over the whole world, showing that God has not forgotten his people, but can bring help from every part of the world.

2. The vision of the horns. These representing the powerful nations of the world which had gored and torn Jerusalem, are being destroyed by the mightier forces of God.

3. The vision of the measuring line, showing that no measuring line is long enough to express the extent of the future city of God they were building.

4. The vision of Satan presenting a list of Israel's sins, while the representative of the nation stands clothed in vile garments, which are changed into the glorious raiment of the high priest.

ILLUSTRATION. It is said that Luther during a serious illness seemed to see Satan coming to him with a great scroll, on which were written all the sins and errors of his life. Looking at him with a triumphant smile, he unrolled it before the saint: "These are your sins. There is no hope of your going to heaven." Luther read the long list, with growing consternation, when suddenly it flashed upon his mind that there was one thing not written there. He said aloud, "One thing you have forgotten. The rest is all true, but one thing you have forgotten. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*"

5. The vision of the Golden Candlestick, supplied by an unfailing source of oil, shows the nation giving light, with its life, beauty, comfort, power and glory, to all the world.

6. The vision of the flying scroll, containing a list of crimes, removes the discouragement which came from the consciousness that many bad people were among them.

7. The vision of the huge measure, bearing far away sin and temptation.

8. The vision of the four chariots, God's messengers, bringing his aid to the Jews from distant regions.

THESE VISIONS express the great religious truths and principles by which the nation could be redeemed. And they bear their meaning down the ages, for all nations and all times, and for each individual as well as each nation. They were full of inspiration and hope.

Five phrases in Zechariah should be engraved in letters of gold upon the memory.

1. NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT SAITH THE LORD.
2. A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE FIRE.
3. WHO HATH DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS?
4. AND THE STREETS OF THE CITY (the new Jerusalem) SHALL BE FULL OF BOYS AND GIRLS PLAYING IN THE STREETS THEREOF.
5. "IN THAT DAY SHALL THERE BE UPON THE BELLS OF THE HORSES, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; AND THE POTS IN THE LORD'S HOUSE SHALL BE LIKE THE BOWLS BEFORE THE ALTAR."

THE TEMPLE WAS COMPLETED in four years (B.C. 576) and its dedication was celebrated by a great festival of joy, by all the tribes and all classes.

The temple was the symbol and type of God's spiritual temple, both the individual Christian and the whole people of God (1 Cor. 3: 10–16).

The Institutions of religion, the Church buildings, and all the rooms and means for

worship and study, are essential to the best religious life. "Without the Temple," says George Adam Smith, "the continuity of Israel's religion could not be maintained."

"Build thee more stately mansions,
Oh, my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outworn shell by life's unresting sea."
—*O. W. Holmes.*

"I read on the porch of a palace bold
On a brazen tablet, letters cast, —
'A house through a million winters old
A house of earth comes down at last.'
Then quarry thy rock from the Crystal All
And build the dome which shall not fall."

LESSON V. — October 29.

A PSALM OF DELIVERANCE. — Psalm 85.

COMMIT vs. 10, 11. READ Psalms 121, 122, 126.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*** — PSA. 126: 3.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

As this is the only lesson for this year in which we study the Psalms, it is well to call the attention of our scholars to the power and blessing of singing and learning, and repeating hymns. What we need is inspiration, uplift, a dwelling in the highest spiritual atmosphere of the best hymns, and the most inspiring music.

We need to sing more enthusiastic songs of religion, and of our Leader, Jesus Christ. In the struggles of the Huguenots for deeper religion, and for freedom of religious life, they sang the Psalms with all the enthusiasm of their souls. In France the Psalms set to popular music became one of the principal instruments in the success of the Reformed Church. Children learned them. They were sung at every meal in the household of Prince Coligny. The Psalms sustained the courage of the martyrs in their torture. Simple women went to their martyr death singing Psalms; and virgins went to the scaffold, singing Psalms, as gaily as to their bridal. Brave men went to battle and to victory singing the Psalms.

I have a friend who in the hospital, in hours of rest at home, in every perplexity, repeats hymn after hymn. One of my joys is to go into the Sunday school room of our church, when no one is there and read the best hymns aloud again and again.

The children should have enthusiastic music, music that appeals to them.

An official song book has lately been compiled for use in the British navy containing such songs as "Ye Mariners of England," "Hearts of Oak," "Bonnie Dundee."

"La Marseillaise" inspired the French soldiers in the darkest times to victory. It "became so distinctively and powerfully a song of revolution that under the restored monarchy and under the Second Empire it was forbidden to play or sing it in public."

In the United States "America" comes the nearest to it; and "The Star-Spangled Banner" has sometimes aroused a wonderful enthusiasm.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psalms 126 and 130.

PLACE IN THE HISTORY.

Just when this Psalm was written is unknown, but in its spirit it belongs to the return from the exile, the times of our last two lessons. Psalms 121, 122, 126, 130 are among the Pilgrim Psalms.

ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The power of hymns and music in our Christian life.
Forgiveness of sins.
Meaning of God's wrath.
How it is expressed.
What forgiveness does for us.
Meaning of v. 10.
Prayer for forgiveness, Psalm 130.
The joy of forgiveness, Psalm 126.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

One of the most bright and helpful books on those Psalms which he discusses is Professor Marvin R. Vincent's *Gates to the Psalm Country* (Scribner's) (121, 122, 126, 130 for this lesson). Perowne's two vols. on *The Psalms* are a fine study, with scholarship and insight. Alexander and Delitsch have each two vol. editions of excellent notes on the Psalms. *David's Harp in Song and Story*, by Joseph W. Clokey. *The Titles of the Psalms*, by J. W. Thirtle, is quite remarkable. (1905, Oxford University Press.) Prothero's *Psalms in Human Life*. (Dutton.) Dr. John Ker's *The Psalms in History and Biography*. *The Psalms*, by Prof. C. A. Briggs and his daughter, Emilie Grace Briggs, in 2 vols., in the series of *International Critical Commentaries*. (Scribner's, 1906.) Van Dyke's *The Story of the Psalms*. (Scribner's.) *The Psalms and their Story*, by W. E. Barton. Professor McFadyen's *Messages of the Psalmists*. (Scribner's.)

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

INTRODUCTION.

I. GOD'S FORGIVENESS OF ISRAEL'S SINS. PROVED BY THEIR RESTORATION TO THEIR OWN LAND, AND BY A NEW SPIRITUAL LIFE (vs. 1–3).

II. PRAYER FOR MORE AND GREATER BLESSINGS (vs. 4–7).

III. THE ANSWERS (vs. 8–13).

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

"Beautiful Snow," a touching and beautiful anonymous poem, in *The Snowflake Album*. (Am. Tract Soc.) The poem, "I sat alone with my Conscience," Joseph Cook's Monday Lectures, *Conscience*. Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and "Richard III." Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* and *The Bosom Serpent*. The Greek Tragedies. Dante's "Purgatorio."

To For the chief Chief Musician: A Psalm for of the sons of Ko'rah.

1. LORD, thou hast been [a] favourable unto thy land:
Thou hast [1] brought back the captivity of Jā'cob.

2. [2] Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,
Thou hast covered all their sin. (Se'lah

[1] Ezra 1 : 11; Psa. 14 : 7. [2] Psa. 32 : 1. *a* Or, *well pleased.*

"Psalms of Deliverance" came as a vivifying power into the hearts of the returned Exiles, who in the midst of their joy were overwhelmed with difficulties, and hardships and discouragements. The reality was far different from the ideal pictures in their minds. They had seen Victory glorious in the distance, but were now plunged into the turmoil and smoke of the battle. They were tempted to say to the prophets what Pliable in the Slough of Despond, angrily said to Christian who had urged him to go on the pilgrimage to the Celestial City: "Is this the happiness you have told me all this while of?"

But songs of deliverance keep the celestial hope ever in view. They give the faith that

> "spies the summer through the winter bud,
> She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
> She hears the lark within the songless egg,
> She finds the fountain where they wailed 'Mirage.'"

They point out the way to the things hoped for, and show "the evidence of things not seen."

I. **God's Forgiveness of Israel's Sins Proved by the Restoration to Their Own Land, and by a New Spiritual Life.** — Vs. 1–3; Psa. 126: 1; 130: 1–4. TITLE. **To the Chief Musician,** the leader of the choir. To be used in public worship. Hence the Polychrome translates "For the Liturgy." **The sons of Korah.** The name of one of the choirs, taken from the famous Korah, one of David's chief musicians, just as now we have the Handel and Haydn Society.

PRAISING GOD FOR HIS SALVATION. 1. **Thou hast been favourable unto thy land,** shown by bringing **back the captivity of Jacob.** This was a most marvelous event and not even to be hoped for in the natural course of things. No signs of this dawn could be seen in the political sky a year or two before. It was one of the mightiest of Providential miracles. So that in Psalm 126 the psalmist bursts out in wondering joy:

3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath:
Thou [a] hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

a Or, *thou hast turned thine anger from waxing hot.*

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion," caused the stream of captives that flowed to Babylon to turn back and flow to Zion; **"like the streams in the South,"** in suddenness and overflowing fulness.

Professor Vincent calls attention to three things which greatly astonished the Jewish exiles. (1) The first was the capture of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. "The popular feeling of amazement is reflected in the vision of Isaiah portrayed in the twenty-first chapter of his prophecy. Those who intelligently read this prophecy will see with what wonder the captives of Judah saw the great empire of the East give way before the comparatively unknown tribes of Persia." (2) The second thing which amazed these exiles was, that they should have been permitted to return at all. How could they dream that Cyrus, the Persian, would reverse the whole Babylonian policy. (3) "The third source of wonder was the escape of the returning exiles from the perils of the journey." It was a four months' journey over a vast desert, with occasional wells and walled stations. "Ferocious herds of Bedouin robbers then as now swept the whole tract." The journey filled the exiles with all manner of terrors, and yet God made their homeward march a royal procession. The way was prepared, mountains of difficulty were leveled, the stones of hindrance were cast out, the dry lands became springs of water.

THIS LOVING KINDNESS OF GOD PROVES THAT HE HAS FORGIVEN THEIR PAST TRANSGRESSIONS, v. 2. **Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people.** Canceled it, as an account of debt is canceled, or taken away as a heavy, crushing burden. **Covered all their sin.** Blotted it out of sight, covered it with a mantle, so that they were in God's sight as those who had never sinned.

"The tide is out, the flats how drear,
The dark and oozing mud laid bare?
Last winter's wreck protrudes its ribs
Against the sunset's ruddy glare,
As if it were a grate of coals
To warm the cool, gray twilight land
And burn the splintered spars that lie
In ghastly heaps along the strand.

"I look again; the tide is in,
The moon rolls up the azure sky;
No more the lonely, gray-ribbed wreck
And spectral spars offend the eye.
The river is a wide, wide sea;
Deep o'er the flats the waters flow.
White shining in the silver light
As if it were a fall of snow.

"To-night my sins seem all in view,
My life one wreck-strown waste and wide;
Thou love of God, flow in, flow deep,
A sea that all my sins shall hide!
And thou, O Christ, our light, look down
In all the luster of thy grace,
Till every wave as mirror hold
An image of thy shining face."
— *Rev. E. A. Rand.*

"Next to the presence and working of the inscrutable spirit of the living God in the world, the greatest social factor of our time is the reality of sin. Modern taste does not like that ugly little word; it prefers 'inherited tendencies,' 'unfavorable environment.' But why juggle with labels when the stuff in the bottle is the same old poison? The fact of sin is inescapable. It is my business to try to study contemporaneous world problems, and I solemnly declare that the one need, apparent to every close observer, which the whole race has in common, is the need for some new motive or power in the heart of humanity which will break or supplant that all-prolific source of social ills — sin." — *Wm. Ellis* in *Boston Herald.*

ALL THY WRATH — THE FIERCENESS OF THINE ANGER, v. 3. God's wrath and anger are not passion, but a terrible indignation against sin and wrong. Our own hearts grow hot over the wrongs, oppressions, and cruelties in the world, but God's indignation is hotter than ours. The better a being is, the greater must be his hatred of all sin and wrong. "A God who was careless about sin, that was not offended by impurity, that did not resent cruelty and injustice, that did not loathe and abhor filthiness and lying; a God that was undisturbed and untroubled by the extent of the evil in his world; could you fear (reverence) such a God? No, you would despise him." — *Professor Elmslie.* We know when we really hate sin, because if we do, we hate it more in ourselves than in others. **Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.** God's hatred of sin had been expressed by the punishment inflicted on the people, by the devastation of their city, the loss of their homes, the bitterness of exile, and all that they had suffered during the past 70 years.

His forgiveness was shown visibly to them by his restoring them to their country and homes, by the new temple and its services, by returning prosperity. But this was the outward sign of far deeper blessings.

THE FORGIVENESS OF THEIR SIN. There are in the Bible nine terms for sin, — Debts, Missing the mark, Lawlessness, Disobedience, Transgression, Fault (moral aberration), Defeat, Impiousness, Discord. These terms show the extent and depth of sin in human life.

Altar of Burnt Sacrifice.

But we need forgiveness as wide as the sin. And we find in the Bible as many terms expressing forgiveness as we found for expressing sin, — Forgive, Remit, Send away, Cover up, Blot out, Destroy, Wash away, Cleanse, Make them as if they had never been.

Thus we find in God's Forgiveness these blessings:

1. The restoration to our Father's family. We have come back home, as obedient and loving children. We are in sympathy with him, and his righteousness. We are in harmony with his nature and purposes.

2. Forgiveness implies the washing away of sin, and the love of sin, the giving of a new heart, the inspiring of a new life, so that it is safe and right to give to the penitent the fruits of the new life in place of the fruits of the former evil life.

3. The soul that once "sat alone with its conscience" and whose experience was:

> "The ghosts of forgotten actions
> Came floating before my sight,
> And things that I thought were dead things
> Were alive with a terrible might;
> The vision of all my past life
> Was an awful thing to face,"—

that soul sees the loving-kindness of a Father's heart, sees the past life in the radiance of God's love, which will make one forget the sin in admiration of God's goodness and mercy and love, in the salvation of such as we are.

4. Forgiveness does not at once remove all the consequences of sin, either from ourselves or from those who have been injured by us.

The experience of the Exiles illustrates this for all time. They could not restore to life those who had been slain in battle or died on the exile journey. They could not for many years restore the country and city to its ancient glory. They must have an inferior Temple. They could not, for a long time, remove the bad influence of their conduct upon the heathen nations, or regain their power as servants of the Most High to be a light in the dark world around them.

5. At the same time Forgiveness of the repentant *does* remove many of the consequences of sin, both from the penitent himself and from those he has injured. I cannot conceive of any real forgiveness that does not remit punishment, and does not save one from the ultimate consequences of sin, although as the change of character and life is slow, the salvation from the consequences of the old life may be slow.

The prodigal returned to his father's house may have many blessings which he could not have while indulging in riotous living, or dwelling with the swine.

The returned Exiles gained a new knowledge of God's Word, a new world experience, they lost the independent Nation, but gained the independent Church, from which blossomed the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. The old, eternal law of sin and death was irrevocable, never ceased; but the changed character permits a new law to override the consequences. In the words of Dr. John Thomas of Liverpool: "Every man who knows anything knows that one law can be neutralized by another. There is a law of gravitation which keeps this Bible here upon the desk. That law cannot be altered, it cannot be stopped; it will draw, and draw, and draw, whatever you may say or do, but it can be neutralized by the law of my will. I can lift the Book and make the law of gravitation to appear as though it were not. That is exactly what we say about the pardon of sin and the arrest of its consequences."

4. [1] Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine anger / indignation toward us to cease.

5. [2] Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6. Wilt thou not [3] revive / quicken us again:
That thy people may rejoice in thee?

7. Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,
And grant us thy salvation.

[1] Psa. 80: 7. [2] Psa. 74: 1. [3] Hab. 3: 2.

As we saw in the second lesson of this quarter, the river of life can transform the desert into a garden, and God's spirit can change the Valley of Dry Bones into living men. The "bird with a broken pinion" may "never soar so high again," but may sing sweeter songs.

What forgiveness did for the exiles is expressed in Psalm 126.

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
The LORD hath done great things for them.
The LORD hath done great things for us;
Whereof we are glad."

II. **The Prayer for More and Larger Blessings.**—Vs. 4–7; Psa. 126: 6. **Turn us,** restore us. God had done much for them, but they longed for more. So many evils remained, the nation was yet so imperfect, so far from what it might be.

ILLUSTRATION from Dr. Chapman's address to the Harvard students. "Remember, friends, that it is God's standard your life and mine must come up against. A friend of mine went to see an old washerwoman, and as he entered the house the sheets hanging on the line in front of the house impressed him as especially white, spotlessly white. He went into the house, and was there for some little time. It had commenced to snow in the meantime. When he came out, he noticed that the snowflakes had been falling on the clothes, and that the sheets did not seem white at all, but yellow rather. He spoke to the old washerwoman. 'Why, what's the matter? They looked so very white when I came in, and now they don't look white at all.' The old woman said: 'What can stand against God Almighty's white?'"

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

O God of our salvation. The one who has saved so far, so wondrously, and who alone can give us still greater blessings.

4, 5. **Indignation . . . angry . . . anger.** God's feelings against sin expressed in the ruins on every side. **Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?** Is it not time now, to make Jerusalem again the glorious city promised by Isaiah (54, etc.)?

6. **Revive,** quicken, **us again.** Give us new life, as the fields in the spring rains and sunshine.

"'Tis life of which our nerves are scant,
Life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that we want."

7. **Grant us thy salvation,** and all that it includes. Such was the prayer of these exiles in their need. It was backed up by many teachings, promises and prophecies, and by many examples in their past history.

8. [1] I will hear what God the LORD will speak:
For [2] he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:
But let them not [3] turn again to folly.

9. Surely [4] his salvation is nigh them that fear him;
[5] That glory may dwell in our land.

10. Mercy and truth are met together;
[6] Righteouness and peace have kissed each other.

11. [7] Truth shall spring / springeth out of the earth;
And righteousness shall look / hath looked down from heaven.

[1] Hab. 2 : 1. [2] Zech. 9 : 10. [3] 2 Pet. 2 : 20. [4] Isa. 46 : 13. [5] Zech. 2 : 5; John 1 : 14. [6] Psa. 72 : 3; Luke 2 : 14. [7] Isa. 45 : 8.

III. **The Answers.** — Vs. 8–13; 126: 5, 6; 130. LISTENING FOR THE ANSWER. **I will hear what God the LORD will speak.** I will listen for the answer. What the boys used to call "runaway knocks," when they rang the door bell and ran away before any one within could open the door, — these are of no avail when we in prayer knock at God's treasure house of answers.

There is a charming little booklet called *Expectation Corner*, an allegory on prayer almost as good as *Pilgrim's Progress*. A poor man in Redeemed Land mourned over his poverty, and was taken at length to see his Lord's treasure houses. There he found a room called the MISSED BLESSINGS OFFICE, full of blessings marked for him which his weak faith would not expect, so that his door was closed when they were brought. He saw another storehouse, called the DELAYED BLESSINGS OFFICE, full of good things for which the receivers were not prepared, or which were not fully ripened for their best use. They were growing, and would be sent in fulness of time.

Trench's *Poems*, "The Suppliant," where it is shown that in the prayer itself is a part of the answer. In each "Come Lord" lies a "Here am I."

"Thy very prayer to thee was given,
Itself a messenger from heaven."

PEACE. **For he will speak peace unto his people,** the atmosphere in which all the best blessings can come to the individual or the nation, — peace with God, peace within the soul, peace with other men and nations, peace of an approving conscience, peace of victory, peace with the laws of God.

ILLUSTRATION. "Their peace shall flow like a river." Beginning in a little mountain spring, it flows, a tiny rill, over many a stony obstacle, down precipices, through forests and green fields, gleaming in the sunshine, somber and slow in the shade, but continually growing stronger and deeper, receiving new life from other streams, till at last it becomes a broad and deep river, flowing peacefully over the rocks that broke it into foam in its earlier career.

GLORY. **That glory may dwell in our land.** God's glory, "the manifest presence of God tabernacling visibly among them as of old." This hope was fulfilled "in a better and higher sense when he who was the brightness of his Father's glory tabernacled in human flesh, and we 'beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.'" — *Perowne.*

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES. 10. **Mercy . . . truth . . . righteousness . . . peace.** "These are the four cardinal virtues of Christ's kingdom. Where these reign among men there must be true and perfect felicity." — *Calvin.* They belong to God's people because they belong to God's nature. **Met together . . . kissed each other.** All the virtues are together in harmony, as they always will be in a perfect character. God's mercy will come in harmony with the truth of his threatenings and his promises. And there can be no peace without righteousness. "The people being willing to follow after righteousness, find peace granted to them at once. 'The war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled.'" — *Spurgeon.* All are the different parts of one anthem.

12. [1] Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good;
And [2] our land shall yield her increase.

13. [3] Righteousness shall go before him;
And shall set us in the way of his steps. make his footsteps a way to walk in.

[1] Psa. 84: 11. [2] Psa. 67: 6. [3] Psa. 89: 14

THE WAY TO THE ANSWER. 11. **Truth shall spring out of the earth,** from men on earth, as plants grow from the ground. They seek God "in sincerity and in truth," and such prayers receive the answer of righteousness from heaven, a right heart, a right life, inspiration to righteousness, and guidance in the right way. "They that sow in tears" of sincere repentance and toil, "shall reap in joy" of a righteous and worthy life.

"Dig channels for the streams of Love
Where they may broadly run;
And Love has overflowing streams
To fill them every one.

"But if at any time thou cease
Such channels to provide,
The very springs of Love for thee
Will soon be parched and dried."

PROSPERITY. 12. **And our land shall yield her increase.** As Haggai (1: 5–11) told them that drought, and mildew, and meager crops were the punishment for their sins and irreligion, so now the blessings of prosperity are promised as the visible reward and sign of God's favor.

GUIDANCE. **Righteousness shall go before Him,** as a herald, for wherever our Father leads us, we shall be led in the right paths. There can be no forward movement except by righteousness. Every other way leads to ruin.

And shall set us in the way of His steps. He will guide us into the same character, the same kind of actions, the same principles and the same results, as God himself, his will being "done on earth as it is in heaven." The R.V. states the same truth a little more clearly, "shall make His footsteps a way to walk in."

"There was once a good, old Quaker who, as a result of calm and wholesome living, had reached the unusual age of 106 years. One morning the old man was sitting on the porch of his cottage, dreaming dreams of peace, when a would-be funny man passed by, and called out to him: 'Hello, father! Is it not about time that you went to heaven?' The old man looked up serenely and answered in his gentle voice: 'My son, I have lived in heaven for the last 40 years.'" —*The Christian.*

LESSON VI. — November 5.

ESTHER PLEADING FOR HER PEOPLE.

Esther 4: 1—5: 3.

PRINT 4: 10—5: 8. COMMIT 4: 13, 14. READ the Book of Esther.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The Lord preserveth all them that love him.* — PSA. 145: 20.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

There is always danger that young people will imagine that the Bible history belongs to another and far away world, rather than the one in which they live.

We come now in our Bible study into contact with a most wonderful nation with the most fascinating history. Its story is recounted in our day schools, and almost every child has heard the tale of Marathon, where 10,000 Athenians defeated 100,000 Persians led by generals of Darius the father of Xerxes (the Ahasuerus of Esther); and of the battle at the pass of Thermopylæ, August, 480 B.C., when Leonidas and his immortal 300 Spartans (together with 700 Thespians), checked Xerxes' army of millions. Themistocles, the Greek commander, with 310 sail, defeated Xerxes' fleet of 2,000 sail at Salamis, near Athens, October 20, 480 B.C. These, with the defeats of the Persians at Platæa in Northern Greece, and at Mycale in Asia Minor on the same day (September 22, 479), were turning points in the history of the world.

They all (except Marathon) belong to the first and second chapters of Esther, between the fall of Queen Vashti and Esther's becoming queen.

The lesson may well be introduced by some of these heroic victories of the Greeks told by or to the class, showing that Esther's heroism was as great as that of these immortal Greek soldiers; and how Shushan was to the Jews what Thermopylæ was to the Greeks.

LEARN BY HEART.

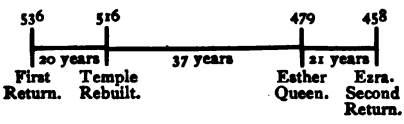
Esth. 4: 13, 14; Rom. 8: 31.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Accession of Xerxes, B.C. 486.
Xerxes conquers Egypt, 1st and 2d years, B.C. 485,4.
He prepares to invade Greece 2d to 5th years, B.C. 484–481.
Vashti deposed in his third year, B.C. 483.
Invades Greece, B.C. 481.
Defeated at Thermopylæ and Salamis, B.C. 480.
Esther becomes Queen, B.C. 479.
Haman's plot, and defeat by Esther (occupying nearly the whole year), B.C. 474.

Place. — Shushan (Susa), the winter capital of the Persian Empire, about two hundred miles south of east from Babylon, and one hundred and twenty-five miles north of the Persian Gulf. The site of the ancient Susa has been explored, and remains of the great palace have been discovered.

Place in the History. — Esther belongs between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, between the first and second return of the Exiles.



PRONUNCIATIONS.

Abīhā'il; Ahăsŭē'rŭs; A'găgīte; Bĭg'thăn; Es'thĕr (Es'ter); Hădăs'sāh; Hā'măn; Hămmĕd'ăthă; Hā'tăch (Hā'tăk); Hĕg'āi; Hē'gē; Jā'ĭr; Mĕmū'căn; Mor'dĕcāi; Shĭm'ĕi; Shū'shăn; Sū'să; Tē'rĕsh; Văsh'tĭ; Xer'xēs; Zē'rĕsh.

ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The Book of Esther.
Its connection with secular history.
Character of Esther.
Heroism of Esther.
Lessons of Patriotism.
Mordecai and Haman.
Religious teaching of the book.

LESSON IN ART.

Esther before Ahasuerus, Steen*, Veronese, Tintoretto*, Doré. *Triumph of Mordecai*, unknown artist.* *Esther and Haman*, Doré*, Rembrandt.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: A Girl's Heroism and Patriotism.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

PROLOGUE. XERXES.

SCENE I. THE ROYAL BANQUET AND A QUEEN'S TRAGEDY.

INTERLUDE.

SCENE II. FROM AN ORPHAN EXILE'S HOME TO A QUEEN'S PALACE.

SCENE III. THE RUIN THAT THREATENED THE JEWISH EXILES.

SCENE IV. THE CALL TO HEROIC SELF-SACRIFICE.

SCENE V. THE WONDERFUL DELIVERANCE.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The latest books on Esther for English readers are the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*, by A. W. Streane, D.D., 1907, and *The International Critical Commentary*, by Prof. Lewis B. Paton, Ph.D., of Hartford Theological Seminary, 1908, for critical scholars. *The Book of Esther*, by the Lowell Hebrew Club, is a thorough investigation in a different line from the *International Critical Commentary*. *The Expositor's Bible*, and all the other commentaries on the Bible as a whole. *The Queens of the Bible*, by Rev. Vallance C. Cook, 1907. Dr. Wm. M. Taylor's *Ruth and Esther*. J. S. Van Dyke's *From Gloom to Gladness*. Sayce's *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*. Dr. Gladden's *Seven Puzzling Books*.

Professor Paton says that he has found "upwards of 700 titles of books and articles on Esther."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Histories of ancient Greece, *Herodotus*, III., 31–36; VII., 27, 29, 38, etc., shows us the character of Xerxes and the Persian kings; so also Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, "The Fifth Monarchy."

For the reign of Xerxes, see Benjamin's "Persia," in the Story of the Nations series, or Maspero's magnificent volume, "The Passing of the Empires." Christina Rossetti's "Sonnet on Esther." *The Star of Love*, by Florence Morse Kingsley; a stirring romance, giving a vivid picture of the days when Esther and Mordecai foiled the evil designs of Haman. (Bloch Pub. Co., N. Y.)

The Book of Esther.—THE AUTHOR is unknown. But the life-like and accurate picture of Persian manners and customs, leads us to agree with Professor Adeney that it must have been some one "living in the heart of Persia, a man who was intimately acquainted with the scenery he describes."

THE DATE OF WRITING is unknown. The *Cambridge Bible* places it *before* B.C. 300. Some place it earlier, and others at various later dates.

ITS HISTORICAL CHARACTER. There are two principal theories concerning the historical nature of this book: one, that it is a veritable history; the other, that it is a historical romance founded on fact, like Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* and *Henry VIII.*, or like Scott's novels, or Homer's great epics. While there are a number of serious difficulties, yet there are few if any unanswerable arguments against its being a true history. For instance one of the arguments against its historical truth is the statement in Esth. 2: 5, 6: "Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah." This was in 597, while Mordecai became prime minister of Xerxes, B.C. 474, i.e. 122 years later. By insisting that the "who" refers to Mordecai, it is shown that it is impossible for an old man of 130 or 140 years to have been prime minister nor an aged, wrinkled old woman more than a century old to have been the beautiful Esther. But the natural reading is to make the "who" refer to "Kish, a Benjamite," and all is simple and true. Not even the most careless romancer would make such a glaring mistake as the one used as an argument against the truth of the narrative.

Megilla — The Book of Esther.

A Hebrew manuscript, 7 feet long, 4 inches wide. Written by a Jerusalem scribe. In a self-rolling olive-wood case. On the outside, beautiful carvings representing different sites in the Holy Land.

"The fact that the action of the book culminates in the establishment of the popular national feast of Purim, and that it is a standing memorial of that feast, argues for its general historicity." — *Prof. Frank K. Sanders.* At the same time, we may well remember that a historical romance, recognized as such, would not discredit the inspiration and truth of the Bible. At most, as with Luther who rejected Esther from the Canon of Scripture, it would only lead us to question whether the book properly has a place in the Bible. Good men differ very greatly and decidedly on this question.

APOCRYPHAL ADDITIONS. In the Greek of the Septuagint are a number of interpolations not in the Hebrew story. In the English Apocrypha these are all placed together, making the whole almost unintelligible; but in the Septuagint they are in their proper places, making a continuous narrative.

LITERARY FORM. Professor Moulton places Esther among his Biblical Idyls, which treat of domestic and homely life, in contrast with the grandeur of the heroic stories of war and enthralling passions. Yet "it hovers on the boundary line between Idyl and Epic history."

The book is dramatic in its scenes, with clear-cut narrative, skilful development of plot, artistic contrasts, romantic story, as the heroine rises from a humble station to become a queen.

The Prologue.—XERXES. Xerxes is the Greek shortened form of the Ahasuerus of Esther, as York, for instance, is a shortened form of the Latin *Eboracum*. He began to reign B.C. 485 and ruled for 20 years. We can best understand Esther by means of those parts of his history which reveal his character.

Xerxes at the very beginning of his reign completed the conquest of Egypt which his father Darius had begun. Trace the journey from Persia, northwest up the Tigris and Euphrates, and along the coast of the Mediterranean in Palestine, only a few miles from the Jerusalem of the returned Exiles.

On his return he immediately began to prepare for the invasion of Europe, and especially of Greece, which then stood, in culture, development, ability and interest, at the head of the world. Thus Xerxes would be master of the world.

For three years he was making preparations, forming magazines of food supplies along

his route, gathering ships from all maritime countries, assembling armies from all nations, a motley throng, each nationality retaining its own dress, armor, weapons and language. Herodotus estimated that Xerxes' total military force when it reached Thermopylæ numbered 2,641,610, with an equal number of attendants, making 5,283,220 persons in all. The sea force is represented as consisting of 3,000 vessels of all kinds. These numbers are regarded by modern historians as greatly exaggerated. Rawlinson reduces Xerxes' military force to 1,500,000, and the vessels to 1,000.

Some of the incidents recorded reveal the character of Xerxes. Across the Hellespont (the Dardanelles) from Asia Minor to Europe, he built two bridges nearly a mile long, as "better suited to the dignity of the monarch who was about to unite both continents under his dominion," than to take his army across in his ships. For the same haughty reason he dug a canal for his ships across the long cape extending southwest from Macedonia. "I intend," he said, "to march through all the parts of Europe, and to reduce the whole earth into one empire, being assured that no city or nation will dare to resist my arms. . . . Thus we shall extend the Persian territory as far as God's heaven reaches."

A great storm destroyed his bridges, and Xerxes was so angry that he executed the architects, and according to Herodotus gave orders that the Hellespont should receive 300 lashes, and a pair of fetters should be cast into it, and even that it be branded with hot irons, to chastise the rebellious stream.

"Xerxes, on his way, halted at Celænæ, a city of Phrygia, where he was entertained by Pythias with incredible magnificence. But when Pythias begged as a favor that, of his five sons in the king's army, the eldest might be left with him in his old age, the brutal monarch went into a rage, and caused the son to be slain in the presence of his father, the body divided into two parts, and placed the one part on one side of the road, and the other on the other, and the whole army marched between them." — *J. S. Van Dyke.*

Xerxes and his army reached Athens, but disaster followed disaster to army and to fleet. "The splendor, the pomp, the luxury were exchanged for disaster, distress and disease. . . . At Abydos on the way home, the army rested from its fatigues, and found plentiful quarters, but intemperate indulgence rendered the sudden change from scarcity to abundance almost as deadly as the previous famine.

"His aim had been not merely to collect a force sufficient to insure success, but, perhaps principally, to set his whole enormous power in magnificent array, that he might enjoy the sight of it himself, and display it to the admiration of the world." But "the remnant he brought back to Sardis was a wreck, a fragment rather than a part of his huge host."

"He had been bred up in the luxury of the Persian court, among slaves and women, a mark for their flattery and intrigues." And now on his return "he gave himself up to a life of dissolute pleasure."—See Harper's *Classical Dictionary*, and *Herodotus*, Book VII.

"He was remarkable for his natural beauty, but he was proud, self-willed, amorous, careless of contravening Persian customs, reckless of human life, yet not actually bloodthirsty, impetuous, facile, changeable." — *Encyclopedia Brit.* "Vainglorious, pusillanimous, licentious, and bloodthirsty, he was a nearly perfect embodiment of most of the qualities which a ruler of men ought not to possess." — *Gladden.* It was at this point that Queen Esther comes upon the stage.

Scene I. The Royal Banquet, and a Queen's Tragedy.—To accomplish his purpose, and to arrange for this invasion of Europe, according to Herodotus, Xerxes held a great assembly of the noblest Persians. It is probable that this is the banquet with which the story of Esther opens, a festive celebration that continued six months, while all matters pertaining to the expedition were being arranged.

One night of these prolonged council festivities, when all were maddened by wine, for Herodotus says that the Persians were addicted to drunkenness, Ahasuerus, in his drunken excitement, insultingly commanded his queen Vashti to come into this reckless assembly of men to show off her royal beauty, thus outraging the most sacred rules of Oriental etiquette. Vashti, indignant at the insult, refuses the indelicate summons of her drunken husband. It is suggested by Professor Adeney that Vashti herself may have been under the influence of the wine drunk at her own feast, and so rendered reckless, and inspired with factitious courage. But while I do not see with Dr. Gladden that "Vashti is the character which most demands our sympathy," yet I do agree with Dr. Taylor when he says: "For my part, I consider her conduct worthy of all praise; and hold that she was entirely right in what she did."

On this account Vashti was deposed from being queen. "To think of conquering Greece while he allowed a woman to set him at defiance!" Those great lords, heated with wine, argued that there was no safety for the men, if the king allowed such disobedi-

ence to go unpunished, and persuaded the king to make a decree, and send it forth throughout his whole empire, in every language and to every province that "every man should bear rule in his own house." "This," says Dr. Taylor, "is undoubtedly one of the most amusing things in all history." "One can hardly keep from laughing outright as he reads the words." "Truly this was the Xerxes who imagined that he could bind the Hellespont by casting in it a few iron fetters!"

There is a whole Temperance lesson in this episode.

An Interval of Four Years, during which Xerxes was busy with his great invasion, noted above, which ended so disastrously.

Scene II. From an Orphan Exile's Home to a Queen's Palace.—On his return to Shushan Xerxes sought a queen in place of the deposed Vashti. The one selected from the most beautiful women of the empire was Esther, a charming Jewess, a descendant of one of the exiles, her great-grandfather being among those carried captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 598 (Esth. 2: 5–7). Her Hebrew name was Hadassah, *the myrtle*, a beautiful and favorite shrub in the East. "Esther" means "a star," and many think it the same as Ishtar the Babylonian equivalent of Venus. She was the cousin of Mordecai, who was much older, and had adopted her as his daughter on the death of her father Abihail, an uncle of Mordecai. She must have been quite young at the time of her marriage, not over 15 years.

A MODERN INSTANCE. "On September 1, 1888, the daughters of all the noble Manchu families in China between the ages of fifteen and eighteen were summoned to the palace at Peking, in order that her majesty, Tzu-hsi, the Empress Dowager of China, might select from among them three wives for 'The Son of Heaven,'" the young inheritor of the throne. He was now 16 years old, and was about to ascend the throne, but must be married first.

"Hence, according to custom, all Manchus above the third rank were invited to offer their daughters as candidates for the highest honors that can be bestowed upon women in China.

"No Chinese were invited, only Manchus, or Tartars; for the present dynasty is of that race.

"Every Manchu family of rank which had a daughter of proper age responded; not only because it would have been disloyal and disrespectful to the Son of Heaven not to do so, but it would be a disgrace which no girl could survive to have her own parents admit that she was not good enough to sit on the throne.

"After six weeks of surveillance the candidates were reduced to thirty, and two hundred and seventy disappointed girls were sent home with rolls of silk and other rich presents to console their pride."

"When the selection had been made from these thirty, they with their parents were summoned to 'The Hall of Peace.'

"The thirty little damsels were arrayed in their most ravishing costumes when they were called forward.

"Whereupon the empress dowager called out of the circle little Yehonala, her own niece, the daughter of her brother, Duke Kuei Hsiang, and handed her a banner of yellow silk, embroidered with the symbols of good luck and long life in jewels. This meant that she had been chosen Empress of China.

"Yehonala was chosen for her intellectual force, her sweet disposition and her attractive character, although she was one of the plainest of the candidates in appearance, and was older than the crown prince." — *Wm. Eleroy Curtis* in *the Youth's Companion*.

ESTHER THE STAR. Esther is "a star" indeed, brilliant, steady, and gaining a gentle and womanly influence on the world. As a star character she shines. Her moral beauty was greater than her physical beauty. So Tennyson speaks of Queen Victoria:

> "Esteem her less for scepter than for ring,
> And count her uncrowned womanhood the truly royal thing."

She was patriotic, brave, devotional, trustful, prudent, risking all for duty and country.

Like a rose bush from defiling soil, like a swan sailing pure and unsullied in a sewer, she kept her religion under the worst of influences.

NOTE. It was no great blessing to Esther to be queen of such a king as Xerxes. There is nothing in her career to make young women seek to be queens of society, or wealth. The blessing to her was the door of opportunity to help others, and the spirit of God and of true religion, which enabled her to use the opportunity.

10. Again Then Es'ther spake unto Ha'tach, Ha'thach, and gave him commandment a message unto Mor'de-cāi; saying:

11. All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into [1] the inner court, who is not called, [2] there is there is one law of his to for him, that he be put him to death, except such [3] to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12. And they told to Mor'de-cāi Es'ther's words.

13. Then Mor'de-cāi commanded to bade them return answer unto Es'ther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

[1] Esth. 5: 1. [2] Dan. 2: 9. [3] Esth. 5: 2.

Scene III. The Ruin that Threatened the Jewish Exiles. — Four or five years pass, and then begins the tragic story of Haman, his rise as a king's favorite, his pride incensed at the conduct of Esther's cousin Mordecai, his attempt to bring vengeance upon the whole Jewish race on Mordecai's account, his success in obtaining a decree from the king, throughout his empire, "to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children, and women, in one day." The tragic end of Haman is intermingled with the story of the deliverance, but we may well look forward and see him planning to ruin Mordecai, but compelled to honor him; see him building a gallows for the Jew, but himself hung thereon. Such men as Haman are beacons of warning from rocks in the sea of life.

"How like a mounting devil in the heart
Rules the unreined Ambition! Let it once
But play the monarch, and its haughty brow
Glows with a beauty that bewilders thought
And unthrones peace forever. Putting on
The very pomp of Lucifer, it turns
The heart to ashes." — *Willis.*

"Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him" (Prov. 26: 27).

EXAMPLES. Massacres on a large scale — not unknown in the West, witness St. Bartholomew's — are of frequent occurrence in the East, where human life is not held in much regard, and the caprices of absolute monarchs determine the course of history. There had been a general massacre of the Magi upon the accession of Darius Hystaspes, the father of Xerxes (*Herod.*, III., 79), and one of Scythians about a century before (*ibid.*, I., 100). These were examples which might occur to Haman. —*Pulpit Commentary.* Haman waited long to find, by casting lots, a favorable day for his purpose. It would require months to promulgate the decree throughout the empire. "It was this grasping nature of Haman's revenge that opened the way for deliverance."

Scene IV. The Call to Heroic Self-Sacrifice. — Esther 4—7. Great mourning and terrible distress came upon the Jews all over the empire as they learned of this decree. Mordecai sent word to Esther, now about twenty years old, asking her to go to the king and request the deliverance of her people. Esther replied (Esth. 4: 11) **Whosoever . . . shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death.** Rather, "there is one law *for him.*" Whoever he be, there is one and the same law regarding him, — he must suffer death. **Except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre.** There was, therefore, a possibility of Esther's reaching the ears of the king, but with the greatest uncertainty as to how such a capricious king would act, especially as his love for her had cooled. The mission Mordecai committed to Esther was one of great danger and difficulty. It required the utmost heroism.

The pages of history abound with startling and tragic examples. Cambyses, in order to show his skill in archery, sent an arrow to the heart of his young cupbearer, the son of his greatest favorite Prexaspes. "The true Persian rejoices to be allowed to kiss the hand of his ruler, even if it be stained with his child's blood." — *Ebers.* See for many more examples, *Herodotus*, III., 31–36; VII., 27-29, 38, 39. J. W. Haley's Excursus K. in the Hebrew Club's *Book of Esther.*

13. **Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther.** He gives four reasons why Esther should undertake the mission. (1) She could not escape the massacre, even if she

14. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* then shall *there* enlargement relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall *be* destroyed: perish: and who knoweth whether thou art *not* come to the kingdom for *such* such a time as this?

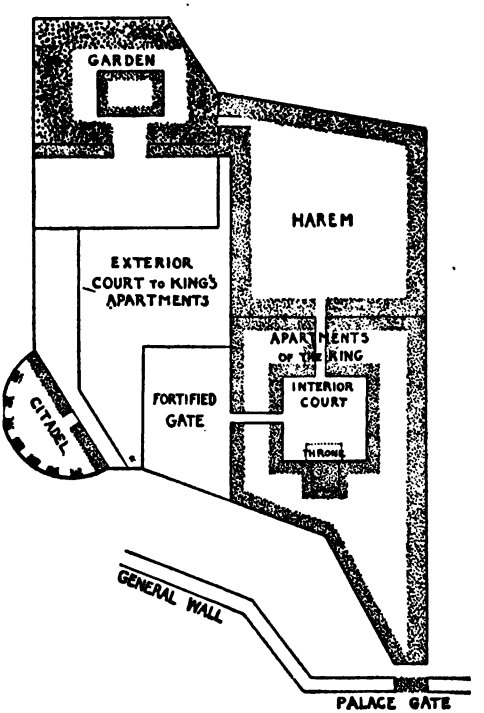
15. Then Es'ther bade *them* them return *answer* unto Mor'de-cāi *this answer*,

16. Go, gather together all the Jews that are [a] present in Shu'shan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink [1] three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast *likewise*: in like manner: and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* is not according to the law: [2] and if I perish, I perish.

17. So Mor'de-cāi [b] went his way, and did according to all that Es'ther had commanded him.

[1] Esth. 5: 1. [2] Gen. 43: 14. *a* Heb., *found*. *b* Heb., *passed*.

should refuse to undergo this danger. (2) She was providentially endowed with beauty and raised to her position as queen for this very purpose. If this was true, God would make her successful. It is a blessed thing to find out what one is sent into this world for. (3) All her relatives would be destroyed. Every motive of patriotism and religion urged her on. (4) Then a great privilege was presented to her, such an opportunity as seldom falls to the lot of any one. The work is certain to be accomplished in some way, but the joy and blessing of doing it, is offered to Esther.



Plan of Xerxes' Palace.

Discovered at Susa, and excavated by M. Dieulafoy. The feast was held in the Gardens. Esther's home was in the Harem opening into the Gardens. Xerxes sat on the Throne in the Interior Court when Esther approached him. She stood at the Interior Court end of the passage way between the Harem and the throne room, when Xerxes held out his golden scepter to her. Mordecai's place was by the Palace Gate.

15. Then Esther bade them return . . . answer. She accepted the dangerous mission.

ESTHER'S WISE PLANS. Esther was remarkably wise and skilful in her plans. FIRST. She sought the help of God. She asked her friends to fast three days in her behalf. Fasting implies prayer, confession of sin and a belief in God. This was on the same principle as Christ's promise to his disciples when two or three agree together touching anything they shall ask (Matt. 18: 19). It is strange that any one should say that there is no recognition of God in the Book of Esther.

SECOND. **Esth. 5: 1. Esther put on her royal apparel.** She was a sensible, practical woman, and used her beauty and charm of person and of dress to accomplish her object. "We may surmise," says Professor Adeney, "that her beautiful countenance was lit up with a new, rare radiance when all self-seeking was banished from her mind and an intense, noble aim fired her soul; and thus, it may be, her very loftiness of purpose helped to secure its success. Beauty is a gift, a talent, to be used for good, like any other divine endowment; the highest beauty is the splendor of soul that sometimes ir-

5: 1. Now it came to pass [1] on the third day, that Es'ther put on [her] royal [apparel], and stood in [2] the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the [entrance] of the house.

2. And it was so, when the king saw Es'ther the queen standing in the court, [that] [3] she obtained favour in his sight: and [4] the king held out to Es'ther the golden sceptre that [was] in his hand. So Es'ther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Es'ther? and what [is] thy request? [5] it shall be [even] given thee [even] to the half of the kingdom.

[1] Esth. 4: 16. [2] Esth. 4: 11; 6: 4. [3] Prov. 21: 1. [4] Esth. 4: 11; 8: 4. [5] Mark 6: 23.

radiates the most commonplace countenance, so that, like Stephen's, it shines as the face of an angel. Instead of degrading her beauty with foolish vanity, Esther consecrated it to a noble service, and thereby it was glorified." See a fuller account of this interview in the Apocryphal additions, chapters XIV., XV.

THIRD. She waited for the fitting time. **2. The king held out . . . the golden sceptre.** The sign that he received her, and that the most dangerous part of her mission was over. "In all the numerous representations of Persian kings at Persepolis, there is not one in which the monarch does not hold a long tapering staff (which is probably the scepter of Esther) in his right hand." — *Cook.*

3. It shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom. Compare Herod's similar promise to Herodias. "In Herodotus IX. 109 we find Xerxes undertaking beforehand to grant whatever should be asked by his consort Amestris in return for a beautifully worked mantle." — *Cambridge Bible.*

Instead of asking her favor here, where she would be surrounded by spies and possible enemies, she invited the king to a banquet in the seclusion of the Harem gardens.

FOURTH. She invited Haman her enemy to join with the king and thus ward off all suspicion, and at the same time have him where he could not escape.

FIFTH. She was very wise in her method of asking her favor, by a feast, and by delays that keyed up the king's curiosity to the highest pitch, and gave her and Mordecai time to make the wisest plans for overcoming the unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians.

In the meantime, a strange providence aided her cause, as shown in Mordecai's knowledge of some traitors, the king's sleepless night, the reading of the records, the morning appearance of the conceited Haman, and the order for him to bestow on Mordecai the honors he thought were meant for himself.

SIXTH. On the second day Esther presented her petition in wise words and pointed out Haman as the enemy who was seeking her life and the life of her people. The king was very angry and immediately deposed Haman, and had him hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

Scene V. The Wonderful Deliverance. — The result was a counteracting decree, permitting the Jews to stand up in their own defense, and large numbers of their enemies were slain. The Jews were saved from destruction, and exalted before the people. Mordecai took Haman's place in the government. The feast of Purim was instituted with great feasting and joy, and has been celebrated annually ever since on the fourteenth of Adar, February-March, one month before Easter.

Several writers of prominence have unjustly condemned the book of Esther for its sanguinary ending. But

NOTE 1. That the only way to judge Esther and the Jews fairly is to put ourselves in her place, with the awful and threatening danger to her people in view, and the ideas of right and wrong possible to her in those days, and the defenses which lay within her power against further wrong to her people.

NOTE 2. That the Jews acted in self-defense. They did not attack.

NOTE 3. That in every case the Jews refrained from spoiling the houses. "On the prey they laid not their hands." This was to prove that they were not seeking their own

advantage; it was to take away this selfish motive which might lead to much unnecessary violence. This is more than has been done in most wars down to our time.

NOTE 4. That we often have to approve of the spirit and motives of men even when we do not approve of the ways in which they express them. This we have to do in all ages.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

1. One of the most interesting studies in the story of Esther is to trace the ways of divine providence, and see how God makes all things work together for the good of his people. God's sovereign grace and man's free will are here seen in perfect harmony.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

2. Esther's courage was the highest form of that virtue. Many a young girl has more real courage than her boastful brother in his physical strength.

3. HEROISM IN EVERY-DAY LIFE is the expression and cultivation of the heroic spirit in our ordinary daily living. We cannot all be heroes in great things, but the field of heroism is everywhere, in every home, in every town. There are great enemies to overcome in our own hearts, there are powers and principalities of evil on every hand.

4. PATRIOTISM is closely allied to heroism. Patriotism is to be far more cherished in peace than in war; it is more difficult, more costly to the patriot, and requires a higher type of courage. To do right when others do wrong, to withstand the tide of false opinion, to stand alone for principle, to turn from all gains though Satan spread out before one, as before Christ in his temptations, "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," to do right at any cost, — here is the universal field of heroism, open to every boy and girl, every day.

5. CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM is to give for God and Christ our King, and for the sake of the kingdom of God, the same devotion, consecration, self-denial that patriotism requires for our country. In reality it is one and the same spirit. And the best thing we can do patriotically for our country is to be true to the principles which Christ taught us, and live a perfect Christian life.

LESSON VII. — November 12.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST AND FATE. — Daniel 5.

PRINT vs. 17-30. COMMIT vs. 25-28. READ Daniel 2—5.

WORLD'S TEMPERANCE LESSON.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.*** — ECCL. 12: 14.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

This lesson, naturally belonging in the Third Quarter with the other lessons from Daniel, was transferred to this place, because it can be made an effective, illustrative, Temperance lesson for this great temperance day of the year, the *World's Temperance Sunday* for the children and youth.

For this reason, the story of Belshazzar and the handwriting on the wall will be treated chiefly as a text, an example, a vivid illustration, to enforce the Temperance teaching of the day.

The story is dramatic, and can be made very interesting in various ways. It can be told by the scholars. It can be read in character.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — The event described belongs to the last years of the exile, B.C. 539, when Babylon was taken by Cyrus and his generals.

The decree of return, and the first return, occurred a year or two later.

Place. — Babylon the capital, enlarged, beautified and fortified by Nebuchadnezzar.

PRONUNCIATIONS.

Bĕlshăz'zăr; Chăldē'ăn; Dărī'ŭs; Mēde; Mē'nē; Năbŏnī'dŭs; Nergăl-Shărē'zĕr; Pĕ'rĕs; Tĕ'kĕl; Uphar'sĭn.

LEARN BY HEART.

Vs. 25–28; Prov. 20: 1.

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Belshazzar.
The story of the capture of Babylon.
The picture of Belshazzar's Feast.
What Belshazzar lost by intemperance.
Religion as a defence against intemperance.
The handwriting on the wall, and its application to intemperance.
Weighed in the balances; strong drink.
Daniel's outspoken courage for the right. A power for Temperance.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Our Great Enemy, Intemperance.

I. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST (vs. 1–5).
II. THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL (vs. 5–9).
III. DANIEL'S FAITHFUL INTERPRETATION (vs. 10–31).
IV. APPLICATIONS TO TEMPERANCE.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

For books on Daniel see Lessons XI. and XII. of the Third Quarter. *Daniel and His Prophecies*, by C. H. H. Wright of Oxford University, is especially good on this lesson.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, Bk. I: 178–191. Xenophon's *Cyropedeia*, VII.; 5, 3. Byron's *Hebrew Melodies*, "Belshazzar." "The Feast of Belshazzar," by Edwin Arnold. "Belshazzar," by Heinrich Heine. Mrs. Phelps Ward's "The Master of the Magicians."

THE LESSON IN ART.

Belshazzar's Feast, by J. Martin*, and by Washington Allston in the Boston Art Museum. *Belshazzar's Vision*, by Benjamin West.* *Daniel Interpreting the Vision*, by Doré.

I. **Belshazzar's Feast.** — Dan. 5: 1–5. Under the great Nebuchadnezzar Babylon rose in grandeur, power and extent, till it became the most magnificent and beautiful city of antiquity. "Herodotus, who visited it about B.C. 450, while its walls and buildings were still perfect, describes it as forming a square of nearly fourteen miles on each side," with walls 350 feet high.

"In those days Babylon was the metropolis of the world, the center of commerce, art, and wisdom." The wealth of the world poured into its coffers. He "made Babylon the strongest fortress in all the world."

BELSHAZZAR was the acting king of Babylon at the time of this lesson, while his father Nabonidus was the nominal and legal king who lived and warred outside of the city.

"There is nothing opposed to the view that Nabonidus, of another dynasty, married the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus Belshazzar would be his grandson. So Rawlinson conjectures. Schrader's theory that 'father' is used here in the broad signification predecessor is more plausible." — *Prof. Ira M. Price* in *Hastings' Bib. Dic.*

CYRUS had been advancing toward Babylon. He gained a decisive victory over Nabonidus, on his way to the capital, and his army entered the city without fighting, and peace was proclaimed.

A portion of the city, probably the citadel including the royal palace, held out for some time, being occupied by the army of Belshazzar as a rallying place. Two or three weeks later Cyrus made his triumphal entry into the city, on October 27. Seven days later, November 4, the general of Cyrus stormed that part of Babylon which had held out against his army, and on that night Belshazzar was slain.

It was during this week that Belshazzar made a magnificent banquet to encourage his generals and princes in their struggle with the Medo-Persian foe. All that royal wealth and luxury could do, "a concert of music in a banquet of wine," when Babylon's capital

> "Had gathered there
> Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
> The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men,"

was brought to bear upon them to arouse, inflame and inspire. At his feast, therefore, Belshazzar sought to remind his warriors of the old campaigns their forefathers had fought. He had in his possession the treasures which these forefathers had carried from Jerusalem when they conquered Israel and, as it seemed to them, Israel's Jehovah.

His conduct thus was not merely that of a drunken debauchee, but partly of a cool politician, when amid the applause of a thousand courtiers and army commanders he ordered

17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

18. O thou king, [1] the most high Most High God gave Něb-u-chăd-nĕz'zar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, greatness, and glory, and honour: majesty:

19. And for and because of the majesty greatness that he gave him, [2] all people, the peoples, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set raised up; and whom he would he put down.

[1] Dan. 2: 37, 38; 4: 17, 22, 25. [2] Jer. 27: 7; Dan. 3: 4.

the sacred vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem to be brought into the hall of feasting, that his wives, concubines and princes might remember the successful campaign in which the independence of Judah had been crushed. — *Condensed from Dr. C. H. H. Wright, on Daniel.*

Such a scene would fill the hearts of the wine-inflamed warriors and nobles to overflowing with daring, and also bring a worthy occasion for the divine interference to encourage his people on the eve of their deliverance.

WHERE BELSHAZZAR FEASTED. "German excavators in the ruins of Babylon have been looking over Nebuchadnezzar's palace. The ancient city is buried beneath the remnant of superimposed buildings, but the tomb of the old civilization has been made to yield its secrets. There has been found the great oblong hall, with an alcove for the throne, where Belshazzar held the famous feast and heard the warning voice of the prophet. Many relics of those precursors of the modern public dinner have been discovered."

II. **The Handwriting on the Wall.** — Vs. 5–9. In the midst of the carousal, the king saw the fingers of a man's hand writing strange words, "letters of fate and characters of fear," on the wall in the full blaze of the candlestick, perhaps the great golden candlestick taken from the temple. "There is something blood-curdling in the visibility of but a part of the hand and its busy writing. No wonder if the riotous mirth was frozen into awe, and the wine lost flavor."

"A dark and bodiless hand,
Gliding in shadowy, slow, gigantic blackness!
Lo, fiery letters, where it moves, break out."
— *H. Milman.*

"The yelling laughter was hushed, and all
Was still as death in the royal hall.
And see! And see! on the white wall high
The form of a hand went slowly by,
And wrote, and wrote, on the broad wall white,
Letters of fire, and vanished in night."
— *Heinrich Heine.*

"A sudden light illumined the pillared hall!
No lamp, no earthly fire could pour such beams.
From sun or comet no such splendor streams.
See — where in flame, yet dazzling, strong, and clear —
That shadowy hand doth trace its words of fear."
— *N. Michell.*

"The portent astounded and horrified him. The flush of youth and of wine faded from his cheek; 'his brightnesses were changed'; his thoughts troubled him; the bands of his loins were loosed; his knees smote one against another in his trembling attitude, as he stood arrested by the awful sight. With a terrible cry he ordered that the whole familiar tribe of astrologers and soothsayers should be summoned." — *Farrar.*

COMPARE Macbeth when he saw the ghost of Banquo at the feast:

"Avaunt and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!
. . . . . .
What man dare, I dare:
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble: . . . . . .
Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence!"

ILLUSTRATION. "Washington Allston spent more than twelve years attempting to paint the scene of Belshazzar's feast, and then left his work unfinished. It is said that the chief difficulty which the artist's genius could not overcome was that of depicting the despair of the doomed king. Well it might be so, for it was the despair of a lost soul brought suddenly face to face with the retributive judgment of God, written by a mysterious hand from another world. What art *can* portray it in the look of a human face?" — *Professor*

20. [1] But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind / spirit was hardened in pride, / that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

21. And / and he was [2] driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was / was with the wild asses: they / he was fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; [3] till / until he knew that the most high / Most High God ruled / ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that / that he appointeth / setteth up over it whomsoever he will.

22. And thou his son, O Bĕl-shăz'zar, [4] hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

23. [5] But / but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, [6] which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, / is, [7] and whose are / are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

24. Then / then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was written. / inscribed.

[1] Dan. 4: 30, 37.
[2] Dan. 4: 32.
[3] Dan. 4: 17, 25.
[4] 2 Chron. 33: 23; 36: 12.
[5] Vs. 3, 4.
[6] Psa. 115: 5, 6.
[7] Jer. 10: 23.

Phelps. That picture is now in the Art Museum of Boston. This unfinished condition is perhaps the strongest possible testimony to the terror of a guilty conscience.

The words on the wall were

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

The words are of the Aramaic (called Chaldee in A.V.) language, with letters like the Hebrew. This language was familiar in Babylon at that time. Only consonants were written. The vowels now written under them were supplied from usage. For the "E" there was a character called A, but in connection with the E, it was a mere soft breathing. It is not known in what way the letters were arranged, but several ways have been suggested.

Farrar.

M	M	A
M	M	A
T	K	L
P	R	S

These are read from left to right, in which case the meaning of the words would be familiar in some languages but the application of the symbols would need interpretation. But in Hebrew and Chaldee the natural reading would be from right to left, and have no meaning to them.

The Talmud.

P	T	M	M
R	K	N	V
S	L	A	A

The Chaldeans, reading them from right to left, as in Hebrew and Aramaic, or from left to right, as in other languages, could make no sense of the words; but Daniel read from top to bottom, beginning at the right.

Professor Moulton.

M	U	P
E	L	H
N	E	A
E	K	R
M	E	S
E	T	I
N	E	N

In this case Daniel would read the first column down, the second up, and the third down, which would puzzle even the magicians for a time.

III. **Daniel's Faithful and Courageous Interpretation.** — Vs. 10–31. Belshazzar, in his terror and horror, summoned his wise men to declare what the strange apparition and the blazing letters meant, and promised great rewards to the one who should interpret them; but all failed. Either they could not make sense of the letters, or could not perceive what meaning they had. Even if they had understood, it is not likely that one of them would dare to speak it out before the king.

Then the queen mother, mother of Belshazzar, came in and spoke of Daniel as one who had shown great gifts at interpretation to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. It took place

25. And this *is* the writing that was written, *a* ME'NE, ME'NE, TE'KEL, U-PHAR'SIN.
26. This *is* the interpretation of the thing: ME'NE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.
27. TE'KEL; [1] Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.
28. *b* PE'RES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the [2] Mēdes and [3] Per'sians.
29. Then commanded Bĕl-shăz'zar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and *put* a chain of gold about his neck, and made proclamation concerning, [4] that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.
30. [5] In that night was Bĕl-shăz'zar the king of the Chal-de'ans slain.

[1] Job 31: 6; Psa. 62: 9; Jer. 6: 30.
[2] Foretold, Isa. 21: 2; v. 31; Dan. 9: 1.
[3] Dan. 6: 28.
[4] V. 7.
[5] Jer. 51: 31.
a That is, *Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divisions.*
b That is, *divided.*

before this boy king was born, and he, naturally, knew nothing about the story. Daniel was sent for, and came into the festival hall. He heard the king's offer, and spurning it, spoke brave and true words which might easily cost him his life.

He told the story of Nebuchadnezzar's fall from the height of pride, and accused him of dishonoring the true God. Then he interpreted the message written on the palace walls.

26. MENE (repeated for the sake of emphasis); **God hath NUMBERED thy kingdom, and finished it.** God had put a definite limit to the number of years the kingdom should last, and that number was now complete.

27. TEKEL; Thou art WEIGHED in the balances, as to his moral character and actions, and art **found wanting,** of light weight like a counterfeit coin, or one that did not come up to the standard required. God had tested him, and he had failed.

28. PERES (the singular of the word **UPHARSIN** in v. 25, the prefix "U" meaning and. It is the same as if **PERES** was written twice, like **MENE,** for emphasis. The interpretation is still more effective because the consonants written P R S on the wall were the same as those which were used for Persians); **Thy kingdom is DIVIDED,** broken to pieces, or separated from the present ruler, and **given to the Medes and Persians,** under Cyrus, whom Belshazzar knew were preparing to attack him.

29. Clothed Daniel with scarlet. The royal purple. **Third ruler in the kingdom.** Either, one of three; or, more probably, next under Belshazzar, who was the second, being under his father, Nabonidus, the king over all.

Thus the Persian conquerors found Daniel, the Jew, not in obscure retirement, but occupying the position of an active statesman, and in a position to help his exiled countrymen.

30. In that night was Belshazzar . . . slain. Swift and sudden came the foretold doom.

PARALLEL ILLUSTRATION FROM THE ORIENT. Mrs. Ghosn-el-Howie of Syria, sends to the *Sunday School Times* the following interesting parallel.

"Incensed at the refusal of his requests by the authorities at Bagdad, Sultan Muhammad el Ghaznawy wrote and threatened the caliph, saying: 'If I but choose, I can deport the very stones of Bagdad to Ghaznat on elephants.' The caliph duly returned a sealed answer. When the sultan opened it, only three letters were to be seen, arranged thus:

"'Aleph' = A
'L a m' = L
'M i m' = M

"Then the sultan's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him. The experts and specialists of his court, who represented the enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers of Belshazzar, were summoned, and first one and then another took up the enigmatic letter with eagerness, but laid it down in despair. Then was Sultan Muhammad more troubled, and his lords were perplexed. At length, Abu Beke el Khasatâny appeared and said, 'I will read the writing unto the sultan.' And after due and reverent study of the three-lettered document, he said, 'The letters a, l, m, spell the interrogative phrase "Dost not"' (which opens chapter 105 of the noble Koran): 'Dost not thou know

that which thy Lord did to the army on elephants?' The verse is well known, and refers to an equally well-known historical incident, — namely, the invasion of Meccah and the Hedjaz by the Abyssinians on elephants when they were unexpectedly discomfited and routed. 'You,' said Abu Beke, 'threatened the caliph by elephants, and he reminds you of the fate of elephants long ago. Beware!' The sultan repented, and sued for pardon. Enigmatic writing of this kind is many times referred to in the history of the country where Belteshazzar and Belshazzar lived, and the art is not obsolete yet."

APPLICATIONS TO TEMPERANCE.

1. Drunkenness, revelry, wine drinking, and excess lead to crimes and errors of judgment, which would never have been committed were the actors sober. It is the mob rule of the eternal forces that ruins men. The drunkard is one whose appetites have broken away from due control. See illustration in First Quarter, Lesson XII., p. 101

"In the monarch's cheeks a wild fire glowed,
And wine awoke his daring mood."

2. The want of religious restraints and motives, exposes one undefended to the powers of temptation. Belshazzar would enrich the splendor of his feast by the sacred goblets and dishes of gold that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple at Jerusalem. They were brought, and made to be instruments for drunken revelry and lust, and worship of idols, thus declaring that the idols had given them the victory over the God of the Jews. He little realized the power of the God whom he was defying, nor the reason why He had permitted the Jews to be disciplined by exile, and that the victory of Cyrus over Babylon was one of the means by which the exiles should be able to return home, and carry those very golden vessels back to Jerusalem. The church in the wilderness was like the burning bush that Moses saw; and like the three heroic men in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, unconsumed because God was with them.

"The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

The true religion, the principles of the kingdom of heaven, and the laws of God, are certain to triumph at last over intemperance and all its evils.

"The tumult and the shouting dies —
The captains and the kings depart —
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

"If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,
Such boasting as the Gentiles use;
Or lesser breeds without the law —
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!"

— *Kipling's Recessional.*

3. The social power of the wine cup, its connection with feasting, comradeship, hospitality, good cheer, is one of its most dangerous attractions. And one of the chief defences against its power lies in showing that good cheer, fellowship, sociability, eating together, may be enjoyed in the highest degree where men "eat and drink and in communion sweet quaff immortality and joy," without the fascination of the wine cup.

4. Belshazzar lost his city and his kingdom. So still by intemperance are men continually throwing away the kingdom God has prepared for them, the kingdom of manhood, the kingdom of self-control, the kingdom of the world in which we live and of its laws which we can compel to aid us in all that is good.

THE NEWEST GAME IN ENGLAND FOR BOYS. Frequently in the *London Sunday School Chronicle* there is reference made to this new game of the *Boy Scouts*. William H. Rideing describes it fully in the *Youth's Companion* for March, 1910. It is one of the most active, attractive, recreative, educational and useful of all games.

"It is almost impossible now for any one to take a walk in England without encountering groups of boys dressed in the fashion of frontiersmen, with soft, low-crowned, wide-brimmed hats, loose blue flannel shirts, knee-breeches, and stout shoes and stockings. Each carries a knapsack and a staff. Each who has passed a satisfactory examination wears a badge shaped as an arrow-head, and inscribed, 'Be Prepared,' which means that the wearer must always be ready to do his duty to his country and his fellow man. A bit of string tied to it may seem insignificant to you, but to him it is a symbol of his obligation to let no day pass without a kindly service to somebody. Should you point to the badge and ask him about it, he would call it his 'life,' and explain that it is given to him as a token that if by any negligence or cowardice he fails in his duty it can be taken away from him — for 'life' to him is honor.

"'Who are these fellows in the blue shirts and slouch-hats?' they ask, and 'What are they up to?'

"Then they are told of the Boy Scouts, the army raised by General Baden-Powell, which within two years has grown to be more than three hundred thousand strong, and which includes boys of all classes in the United Kingdom and the colonies.

"The attraction is irresistible; it is stronger than anything that the recruiting sergeants of the crack regiments with strings of medals and many-colored ribbons on their breasts and glittering king's shillings in their fingers have to offer.

"They are soldiers of peace. Their service is voluntary and unpaid. It is given in their leisure and in their holidays, and its object is social rather than military.

"Its fundamental purpose is to make them alert, healthy, well-mannered, self-sacrificing and honorable. It combines the pledges of ancient chivalry with the practical aims of social service.

"Like the knights of old, they vow that their honor shall be sacred; that they will be loyal to God and their country; particularly courteous to all women, children and infirm people; helpful to everybody, and that they will keep themselves strong in order that they may do all these things well."

In many respects it is like our *Knights of King Arthur*, but with several additional features.

They are taught to observe very carefully, and to make true deductions from their observations, as in the famous *Story of the Dervish*.

The first class scout must be able, among other things, to do these nine.

"1. Tie four of the following knots in less than thirty seconds each knot: Bowline, fisherman's bend, reef knot, clove hitch, sheet bend.

"2. In a town, describe satisfactorily the contents of one shop-window out of four observed for one minute each.

"3. Point out the direction of different points of the compass from where he stands.

"4. Make a journey alone of not less than fifteen miles from point to point by walking, riding, boat or bicycle.

"5. Describe or show the proper means for saving life in case of one — selected by the court — of the following accidents: fire, drowning, runaway horses, sewer-gas, breaking ice; or bandage an injured patient, or revive apparently drowned persons.

"6. Be able to read and write.

"7. Have at least something in the savings-bank.

"8. Show that he has brought a recruit to the Boy Scouts, and has taught him to tie the principal knots.

"9. Lay and light a fire, using not more than two matches, and cook a quarter of a pound of flour and two potatoes without cooking utensils.

"As to alcohol, he says any one who is in the habit of drinking it is not of the slightest use for scouting, or for anything else. Nor do the scouts smoke. 'The best war scouts don't smoke because it weakens their eyesight; it sometimes makes them shaky and nervous; it spoils their noses for smelling, — which is of great importance at night, — and the glow of their pipe, or even the scent of tobacco carried on them after dark, gives them away to watchful enemies. They are not such fools as to smoke. No boy ever began smoking because he liked it, but because he thought it made him look like a grown-up man. As a matter of fact, it generally makes him look a little ass.'"

5. MENE, MENE. The days of Intemperance are NUMBERED when all the boys become total abstainers.

TEKEL. The wise young man sees to it that the whole question of the use of intoxicating liquors is WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES of reason, of science, of observation.

PERES. The kingdom, of all that is best and noblest, is DIVIDED from the intemperate, and given to those who use absolute self-control.

ILLUSTRATION. Professor Wilkinson in his *Epic of Paul* represents Paul as enforcing the truth of judgment to come by an Old Testament example.

"Belshazzar, Babylonian king of old . . .
Saw visionary fingers of a hand
Come out upon the palace walls and write.
. . . . . .
Thus, O Lord Felix, in our hours of feast,
Oft, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, . . .
Appalling words of final doom from God,
In lurid letters live along the walls
Of the soul's pleasure house — for who will heed!
Remorse, doubts, recoils, forebodings, fears,
And fearful looking for of judgment nigh,
Previsions flashed on the prophetic soul
Refusing to be hooded not to see —
These are handwritings on the wall from God;
They, syllabling the sentence of His ire,
Spell MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN,
For pleasure-lovers lost in lust and pride."

LESSON VIII. — November 19.

EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM. — Ezra 8: 15-36.

PRINT vs. 21-32. COMMIT vs. 21, 28. READ Ezra 7-10.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him.***—EZRA 8: 22.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

As we have been for the last three lessons, turning aside from the regular historical books, to Psalms, Esther and Daniel (all of which however belong to the history) it will be wise to begin this lesson with a brief review of Events and Dates.

We may follow a suggestion used in a Michigan school.

On a piece of soft pine board, or a blackboard, drive three rows of wire brads at distances determined by the size of the cards, one for dates, one for events and one for persons — thus

DATES . . . . . .
EVENTS . . .
PERSONS . . .

On cards perforated at one end so as to slip easily over the small nails, write the following: DATES 605, 597, 586, 536, 516, 486, 458.

Then the EVENTS on another series of cards.

First Captivity. Second Captivity. Destruction of Jerusalem and Temple. First Return. Temple Rebuilt. Esther. Second Return. Length of Captivity.

The PERSONS on a third series of cards.

Daniel carried captive; many exiles; Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Haggai and Zechariah, Xerxes and Haman, Ezra.

Give the dates to one of the scholars to hang up in order.

The "events" and "persons" are placed together on the table, and the scholars are to place them in their proper order under the dates. As for instance

Dates	605	597	586	536	516	486	458
Events	1st Captivity	2d Captivity	Temple Destroyed	1st Return	Temple Rebuilt	Esther	2d Return
Persons	Daniel	Thousands of Exiles	Nebuchadnezzar	Cyrus	Haggai Zechariah	Xerxes	Ezra

TRACE the route of Ezra on the map.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psalm 1; Isa. 42: 3.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B.C. 458, the seventh year of Artaxerxes.

Ezra leaves Babylon with his company on the 1st day of the 1st month, March; and reaches Jerusalem on the 1st day of the 5th month, July.

The convocation was on the 20th day of the 9th month (in Nov.-Dec.).

His reforms were made during the winter, Dec. 458, to Mar. 457.

Period. — This return was 78 years after the first Return in 537,6 and 58 years after the completion of the temple, and 16 years after the intervention of Esther.

Place. — Babylon. Jerusalem.

Contemporary History. — Socrates was born B.C. 468. Pericles, the great Athenian statesman and builder of the Parthenon, was ruler of Athens (469-429). Herodotus was living (484-424).

THE ROUND TABLE.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

State of things in Judea for the past half century.
Ezra and his work.
His purpose in going to Jerusalem.
Volunteers for service and giving.
Business methods for honesty.
Why he refused a guard.
Reasons for fasting.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

I. A PICTURE OF THE SITUATION IN JUDEA DURING THE HALF CENTURY AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE.

II. WHAT THE EXILES IN BABYLON HAD GAINED WHICH THE PALESTINE JEWS NEEDED.

III. EZRA PREPARES TO BRING NEW LIFE AND BLESSINGS TO HIS PALESTINE BRETHREN. A HOME MISSIONARY EXPEDITION (vs. 1-32).

IV. EZRA'S WORK OF REVIVAL AND REFORM IN JUDEA (chapters 9, 10).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Books on Ezra in Lessons III., IV., especially Cornill's *History of Israel*, and Hunter's *After the Exile*. *Ezra Studies*, by Prof. C. C. Torrey, demands so much familiarity with Greek, Hebrew and Syriac, and accepts such revolutionary conclusions, that the ordinary Sunday school teacher can gain little help from it. *The International Critical Com.* on Ezra and Nehemiah by Dr. L. W. Batten, will probably be published before this lesson will be used.

LESSON IN ART.

Artaxerxes Granting Liberty to the Jews, by H. Melville * and Doré.

The Jews in Foreign Countries Come to the Aid of the Home Church.

I. **A Picture of the Situation in Judea During the Half Century after the Completion of the Temple.** — The nearly sixty years between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, of which there is almost no direct record, could scarcely be called "the blank annals of well-being";

> "As times of quiet and unbroken peace
> Though for a nation times of blessedness,
> Give back faint echoes from the historian's page."

"Without these happy periods of dulness our lives would be hell, and our hearts eternally bubbling and boiling in a huge pot made hot with thorns."

But these were years of slow progress, of dulness, and neglect, like a garden wherein the heavenly plants, while still growing, were overrun with weeds, and the vines and olive trees, untrimmed and neglected bore but small and scanty fruit. "And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" (Isa. 5: 2).

DESOLATIONS. The Temple had been built, but the opposition had been so great that the walls had not been restored and the rubbish still arose in long-stretching mounds. The visions of glory had faded. "They had expected a vast influx of their brethren, from Babylon and other lands, but had been to a great extent disappointed. There was no sign, as yet, of the wealth of the Gentiles being poured into their treasuries, as had been promised by Haggai."

CRIMES. "The country was pillaged in open day, and many Jews carried off into slavery by nightly surprises, while the corpses of murdered men were often found on the road." — *Geikie.*

POVERTY. Poverty, oppression, hardship, and disappointment had settled down on the little Jewish community, which now found itself far worse off financially than the captives at Babylon. Business opportunities in Palestine were few and small. They were like the Christians of Jerusalem in Paul's time, poor and shut out from many opportunities of making a living. "The tiny community in Judea had to wage, as a whole, a long and sordid struggle against poverty and adverse surroundings." — *Hastings' Bible Dict.*

THE TEMPLE WORSHIP was doubtless continued, but apparently in a formal and lifeless manner. And the contributions given by the exiles for the temple, show that it had been neglected (Ezra 8: 25).

EXCLUSIVENESS. At first the Jews were very exclusive. They would not allow even the Samaritans to aid them, lest the purity of their race and their religion be defiled. "Feeble and isolated, the policy of exclusiveness involved commercial ruin; and men who knew how their brethren in Chaldea were enriching themselves by trade with the heathen were galled by a yoke which held them back from foreign intercourse. It would seem to be advisable on social as well as political grounds that a new and more liberal course should be pursued, if the wretched garrison was not to be starved out." — *Professor Adeney.*

ALLIANCES WITH HEATHEN. Hence the leaders changed their policy, and they were followed by others, with disastrous effects. They began to make alliances with the Gentiles, the leading families intermarrying with the heathen, till the land became defiled with

the filthiness and abominations of idolatry. The religious home life was being destroyed. Laxity of morals, religious indifference, desecration of the Sabbath, moral ignorance, were in the ascendancy; the spiritual declined, and high ideals grew dim. See Ezra 9: 1, 2, 11; Neh. 1: 3; 13: 15–17. Such was the condition of things seventy-eight years after the first joyous Return.

ATTEMPTS TO BUILD THE WALLS. "After the Temple was built there were several efforts to restore the walls of the city, but these efforts were frustrated on the appeal of the other peoples in Palestine to the Persian throne." — *Geo. Adam Smith* in his *Jerusalem*. But some kind or degree of wall was necessary to make the city safe at all.

II. **What the Exiles in Babylon Had Gained, which the Palestine Jews Needed.** — 1. PROSPERITY. The exiles, as time went on, and many of them became practically foreign citizens of Babylonia, had far larger opportunities for business and wealth, than those who had returned to Jerusalem. "The center of Jewish culture, wealth and leisure was at this time — and for some time continued to be — Babylonia, where external circumstances had become (since the Persian supremacy) comparatively favorable for the Jews." — *C. H. Box* in *Hastings' Bible Dict.*

2. RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION. "There was accomplished in the Babylonian exile, and as a consequence, that remarkable transformation which MADE OF THE JUDEAN STATE A JEWISH CHURCH, of the Israelitish people a Jewish Congregation." — *Cornill.* Thus taken out of politics and its conflicts, the Jewish community had its best opportunity for its true religious development.

3. The very presence of idolatry with all its religious and moral degradation, and the intensity of its opposition, the severity of its temptations, "knit together by the indissoluble ties of religion and custom" those who had the real religious life within them. Having no material basis for the national life, they "clung all the more tenaciously to those spiritual possessions which alone gave the nation a title to existence."

"They were like a white lily growing on a dung heap."

They were like an oak in the open beaten by every adverse wind, bent before every storm, and thus growing stronger and firmer by the opposition.

"Give me, O God, power to make all my sorrow music for the world."

ILLUSTRATIONS. In the cemetery among the beautiful hills of Williamstown stands a monument to one of my college classmates. While wrestling, in his freshman year, he injured his knee. Lameness, pain, and ill-health were his guardian angels through study and travel, till he became a professor in the college and a saintly man, whose face shone almost like that of Moses when he came from the presence of God. On that monument are carved the words which his life had wrought out: *Meine Trübsal war mein Glück*, "My misfortune has been my good fortune." "My trouble has been my blessing."

Almost everyone who has grown in grace has learned the truth of that Greek proverb, old as Herodotus and Æschylus, *Ta pathemata mathemata*, "The things we have experienced," our burdens, our difficulties, our struggles, our sufferings, are "the things that teach us."

Helen Keller is a similar instance of God's marvelous work. So Job by his sufferings has showed forth God's glory to the world.

Goethe says, "I never had an affliction which did not turn into a poem."

4. Out of the darkness shone more clearly the star of hope, the promised Messiah. The last chapters of Isaiah, whenever written, and the prophecies of Daniel, belong to the exile; and all their visions of the Saviour-King, and of the Messianic times, kept their ideal and goal before their eyes, growing more and more glorious.

ILLUSTRATION. "Do you remember Watt's painting, 'Hope'? She sits blindfold on the top of the world, you remember, the strings of her harp all broken but one; and she makes the best music she knows how on that one string, hoping all the while, I doubt not, for a better harp."

5. Ezra was a scribe and a diligent student of the Law, and the prophets and the history of the nation. He edited, translated and interpreted the sacred books. "He doubtless stood at the head — or at any rate was a leading figure — of a new order which had grown up in the exile." — *G. H. Box* in *Hastings' Bible Dict.* "There had developed in Babylon, of all places, a regular theological school, which pursued the study of the Law." — *Cornill.*

Foreign culture and literary activity made their indelible impress on the Jews. Scribes, the learned men of the nation came into prominence, and the age became one of intense literary activity. "They copied, commented, recast, and wrote." They "saved the people from the worst of all possible calamities — from ignorance of its own past." "They had

21. Then I [1] proclaimed a fast there, at the river of A-hā'va, that we might [2] afflict (humble) ourselves before our God, to seek of him a [3] right (straight) way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

[1] 2 Chron. 20: 3. [2] Lev. 16: 29; Isa. 58: 3, 5. [3] Psa. 5: 8.

not the altar, but they had the book." "The work which the warriors had striven to accomplish by the power of the sword, and the prophets by the power of abstract ideas — the work of welding the people into one compact whole, was now being accomplished, unobtrusively, yet steadily and surely, by the power of a book, the Book of the Law." "The men exalted the book, the book exalted the men." — *Hunter's After the Exile.*

6. Hence there was "an increasing strictness of doctrine and practice." "The Sabbath assumed a new spiritual character, and was observed most strictly as a solemn day of rest and prayer."

7. "The Babylonians 'had cultivated arithmetic, astronomy, history, chronology, geography, comparative philology, and grammar.' In astronomy they were so advanced that they had mapped out the heavens, catalogued the fixed stars, calculated eclipses, and accounted for them correctly. Their enormous libraries of terra-cotta, only now being unearthed, testify to their literary activity." "Internally, the religion of Israel is solitary, pure, divine." Externally, the literary form of it owes not a little to Babylon. — *Professor Adeney.*

III. **Ezra Prepares to Bring New Life, and New Blessings to his Palestine Brethren. A Home-Missionary Expedition.** — Vs. 1–32. Ezra, no doubt knowing the condition of things in Jerusalem, had not only "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it," but he planned to go up to Jerusalem and "teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7: 10).

"Moved by religious zeal, and also, it would seem, with the statesmanlike view of making Jerusalem once more the real Spiritual Metropolis of Judaism, Ezra conceived the idea of infusing new life and new ideals into the Judean community by leading a fresh band of zealously religious exiles back to Judea on a mission of reform." — *Hastings' Bible Dictionary.*

Ezra needed three things, authority, men, money.

1. AUTHORITY was granted him by Artaxerxes the king, who made a decree which included all the things Ezra needed.

2. VOLUNTEERS. There was no conscription or forced levy, but whoever "were minded of their own free will to go" (Ezra 7: 13). About 1,700 persons, including heads of families and their retainers (Ezra 8: 1–14), priests, Levites, and 220 Nethinim, or the servants who assisted in the work about the Temple. Only volunteers would be of much service. Only volunteers can serve the kingdom of God, those who are filled with the spirit of service, of love to men, and love to God and his kingdom, they, "follow in his train."

3. MEANS to carry out Ezra's purpose. Free-will offerings alone were used. These came from the king, his counselors, the people and the priests. But the king, besides making up deficiencies from his own treasury, commanded that the treasurers of the countries bordering on Palestine should give out of the national treasury all that Ezra required up to $97,000, in silver, 1,000 bushels wheat, 860 gallons of wine, and 860 gallons of olive oil.

THE RENDEZVOUS (v. 15) was at Ahava by the river, doubtless one of the many canals running across the Babylonian plains into the Euphrates, and probably not very far from the city. Here they remained three days.

THE DANGER AND HOW EZRA MET IT (vs. 21–23). For an unarmed company of religious pilgrims, carrying with them more than two million dollars in gold and silver, to take a four months' journey through lands infested with wandering bands of Bedouin, and through kingdoms none too favorable to the Jews, — was a very dangerous undertaking. **Then I proclaimed a fast.** Fasting, as a religious act, would seem to have its basis in (1) a grief over sin so deep and intense that all desire for food is taken away. (2) In the aid to devotion furnished by a body unburdened with food, so as to leave the mind and heart in their most active and free condition. (3) It is the natural expression of deep sorrow for sin. It is not enough for the heart to feel deeply; it needs to express its feelings, though the proof that the fasting is sincere lies in forsaking the sin repented of and doing deeds of righteousness. The object was (1) **that we might afflict ourselves before our God,** in humble penitence, putting away all sin, neglect, hardness of heart,

22. For [1] I was ashamed to require (ask) of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, [2] The hand of our God is (is) upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is (is) [4] against all them that [5] forsake him.

23. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was [6] intreated of us.

24. Then I separated twelve of the chief (chiefs) of the priests, even Shĕr-e-bī'ah, Hash-a-bī'ah, and ten of their brethren with them,

25. And (and) weighed unto them [7] the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even (even) the offering (for) the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his princes (lords), and all Israel there (there) present, had offered:

[1] 1 Cor. 9: 15.
[2] Ezra 7: 6, 9, 28.
[3] Psa. 33: 18; Rom. 8: 28.
[4] Psa. 34: 16.
[5] 2 Chron. 15: 2.
[6] 1 Chron. 5: 20; 2 Chron. 33: 13.
[7] Ezra 7: 15, 16.

worldly-mindedness, — the things which would render it impossible for God to give them success in their journey. It meant submission, consecration, and repentance. (2) **To seek of him a right way.** The fasting was accompanied by prayer (v. 23) and they expected an answer to their prayer. Fasting and prayer were also the natural means of clarifying their own minds so that they could receive and recognize the wisdom God would bestow upon them.

22. For I was ashamed to require of the king, etc. Ezra had told the king that God was with his people, and against their enemies; and, therefore, to ask a guard of soldiers might seem to the king to contradict his assertions, and bring disgrace on God's cause.

23. And he was intreated of us. Ezra had the assurance that his prayer had been heard.

NOTE that while Ezra refused a guard of soldiers, Nehemiah, equally devoted, accepted a guard (Neh. 2: 9). Both plans were right, each in its own circumstances. George Müller never asked any one but the Lord himself for the money by which to build and sustain his great orphanages in England, and he never failed. On the other hand the great modern missionary societies are continually asking the churches in the name of the Lord for funds for their work, and they have been wonderfully successful. Both had faith in God. The use of means is no mark of want of faith, often it is the sign and proof of faith.

BUSINESS MEASURES. Lest there should be the least taint or possibility of dishonesty in using this vast sum of money, Ezra put it in the hands of several of his best men, had it weighed at the beginning of the journey, and also on its arrival in Jerusalem, vs. 29, 33.

24. I separated twelve, etc. He committed the treasure into the hands of twelve chief priests of whom the first two are named. These men would take special charge and be responsible for the safe keeping of the treasure. Besides, it would relieve Ezra of all possible scandal in regard to it.

25. And weighed unto them the silver,

Caravan Crossing a Desert.

26. I even weighed unto (into) their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents; and (and) of gold an hundred talents;
27. Also (and) twenty basons (bowls) of gold, of a thousand drams (darics); and two vessels of fine copper, bright brass, [a] precious as gold.
28. And I said unto them, Ye are [1] holy unto the LORD; and the vessels are [2] holy; also; and the silver and the gold are (are) a freewill offering unto the LORD, the God of your fathers.
29. Watch ye, and keep them (them), until ye weigh them (them) before the chief (chiefs) of the priests and the Lē'vītes, and the chief (the princes) of the fathers (fathers' houses) of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD.
30. So took the priests and the Lē'vītes received the weight of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them (them) to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.
31. Then we departed from the river of A-hā'va on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and [3] the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and of such as lay (the lier) in wait by the way.
32. And we [4] came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

[1] Lev. 21: 6; Deut. 33: 8.
[2] Lev. 22: 2, 3; Num. 4: 4.
[3] Ezra 7: 6, 9, 28.
[4] Neh. 2: 11.
a Heb., *desirable*.

etc. We may gather from this that the silver and gold were in bars or ingots, and not in coined money. "The Persians had coined money at this time, but the treasury kept the bulk of its stores in bars (*Herod.*, III., 96)." — *Pulpit Com.*

26. Talents of silver, each worth $970. Light standard which was probably used. The heavy standard was twice as much. See *Oxford Cyclopedic Concordance*. **Talents of gold,** each worth $14,542.

THE TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS amounted to $727,000 in silver, and $1,460,000 in gold. A very generous contribution for Home Missions.

27. Drams. Darics, gold coins, worth about an English sovereign, or a little over $5.00.

28. A freewill offering unto the LORD God. The money was for the temple and religious purposes, and would be a great help to the people at Jerusalem as well as smooth the way of Ezra to the needed reforms.

31. Then we departed. They started from Babylon on the first day of the first month (Ezra 7: 9), which would be some time in the last of March or the first of April (according to the date of Easter and Passover). It took some time to reach Ahava and get things thoroughly arranged for the journey, so that it was **the twelfth day of the first month,** about the time of the Passover (the 14th of the month), our Easter, before they began their long march. **And the hand of our God was upon us,** the hand that defends, the hand that gives, the hand of friendship.

32. And we came to Jerusalem, after a journey of four months, arriving there the first day of the fifth month, or about the middle of July. The distance in a direct line was about 500 miles, but the road followed by Ezra's caravan made a long detour to avoid the desert and could hardly have been less than 900 miles (see *Cambridge Bible*). From Ahava the time was 110 days, so that the caravan averaged nine miles a day, omitting Sabbaths, which was as fast as a caravan could easily go, with women and children walking, and household effects to be carried.

IV. **Ezra's Work of Revival and Reform at Jerusalem.** — Chapters 9, 10. WHAT HE BROUGHT TO JUDEA: 1. He brought two million dollars for the repairs of the temple, and for all that was necessary to put the outward forms of worship in perfect condition.

2. He infused the community with his own devoted and consecrated spiritual life and fervor.

Compare Savonarola's work in Florence. For a time his spirit dominated the city in a marvelous way. "So long as it lasted (two years) immorality and luxury were out of fashion in Florence. The vileness which calls itself pleasure was paralyzed, and immodesty

and impurity scared into corners out of sight." "The streets were safe, the populace quiet." The carnival under the Medici had been a very Saturnalia of license, and "none were more wildly riotous than the children," but Savonarola so controlled the passions of the street gamins, whom "all other kinds of authority had been tried in vain to curb in their frolic, especially the dangerous war with stones," that he organized them into bands, set them to collecting money for the poor, at altars in the streets, and to collect the dresses and masks of the carnival, and they made in the square a great Bonfire of Vanities; they gave up their vile songs for hymns of praise. And on a Palm Sunday, when these same children marched in white robes and red crosses, "so much joy was there in all hearts that the glory of Paradise seemed to have descended on earth."

3. Ezra brought with him the Book of the Law and the Prophets, with its strict morality, and made it known to the people. In contrast with this holy law the conduct of the people in adopting "the abominations" of the heathen appeared in all its glaring wickedness.

4. Then Ezra entered upon his great reform. Some of the leaders pointed out to Ezra that the people, even the princes and rulers, were inter-marrying with the idolaters, and there was danger that the religion of Israel would be destroyed, that all the sins which caused the Exile would be repeated, and all that the Exile had done as a discipline would be lost.

Ezra first by himself was astounded and stunned by the report, and showed all the signs of deepest sorrow and humiliation (Ezra 9: 3).

Then there was a meeting together with him of "every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away." They sat in bitter astonishment till the time of evening prayer. Then they bowed themselves before the Lord, and wept and prayed and confessed and entreated. Read Ezra's most pathetic prayer in 9: 6–15.

Then followed a public meeting, "a great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." It is hard for us to realize the awful, heart-breaking, pitiable occasion this was.

On the one hand, was the displeasure of God, the consciousness of guilt, the natural punishment for breaking his laws, the evils that would certainly come upon them, if they persisted in their defiance of eternal law.

On the other hand, to forsake their sins, meant the breaking up of families, separation of husband and wife, and perhaps of children, the making bitter enemies of the heathen families to which many of them were allied.

Then came the great moral Reform. There was a proclamation throughout all Judah and Jerusalem, that all should gather themselves unto Jerusalem, upon pain of having their property confiscated, and themselves excommunicated from the brotherhood of Israel. In a great rain they confessed, repented, and reformed. For this Ezra has been called stern, narrow, "bitterly intolerant," marked with "a spirit of exclusive patriotism," a "total absence of human tenderness," a "pitiless legalism."

In answer note, —

1. The course of the Israelites was ruining the nation exactly as Ahab's marriage with the idolatrous Jezebel came very near ruining the nation in his time. And Ezra and the people knew it. There was only one way of saving the nation, and that was for the people to repent and cease doing wrong.

2. And this plan of Ezra's is acted upon to-day by the best people in the most Christian lands. Those who are bribing and taking bribes — trying to get rich by graft and dishonesty, forging, cheating banks, committing all kinds of crime, although the sinners are rich, and officeholders — are now working in jails separated from their wives and children, and are learning honest trades. It is sad, indeed, but there is no other way of saving the nation.

3. The suffering involved by Ezra's course was not necessarily so great as it would seem, not so great as imprisonment of a family man causes to-day. The man could still support the discarded wife and children, and do all possible for her comfort. But he must not join in her idolatry, or be subject to a bad family atmosphere.

4. The suffering caused by this course was the fruit, not of Ezra's work, but of the wrong-doing. The physician is not to blame for the bitterness of his medicine, nor the surgeon for amputating the limb. Ahab laid all his sufferings to Elijah, saying, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" "And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim."

This course is not narrow, it is simply wise statesmanship for the preservation of our country. There are things that must be shut out unless they will change; and some in our own day need to learn this lesson.

True liberality is both Christian and wise. But even the wisest reformers would not include rumsellers in the Christian Temperance Union, nor think that town blessed that did not say to saloon keepers, "Repent or go." The choir is not narrow because it does not include those who can only make discords, nor is the sheepfold intolerant that refuses to include wolves, nor the medical society that excludes quacks, nor the church that does not invite the unrepentant wicked to its communion.

SOME FURTHER LESSONS.

1. The work of the reformer is hard. It requires heroism and love of country.
2. It is a great thing to help others. Boys and girls should be trained to be helpers. Find something every week for them to do.
3. It is a great thing to volunteer for some hard and good service.
4. It is a great thing to be interested in Home Missions, and to help on large contributions for this cause.

LESSON IX. — November 26.

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER. — Nehemiah 1.

COMMIT v. 9.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*** — JAS. 5: 16.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

As this lesson is on Prayer, the teacher himself may begin his work by taking a lesson from Dr. R. A. Torrey's experience, where on a hot sweltering day he began his talk to 7,000 children who were naturally restless under the circumstances. He says:

"I told the story of how the little girl touched the button in New York that sent the electric spark through the powder under Hell Gate. I was illustrating the power of prayer. I said 'there is but little strength in my finger, but when I pray I put forth my weak finger and touch the arm of God, the arm that moves the universe, and that mighty arm moves to do its work.' I went on to say that this passage was so dangerous that it was decided to blow the rocks up and clear the passage, and for days and weeks and months they tunneled underneath the rocks and then laid powder and other explosives; that a wire was run from an electric machine in New York to the powder, and that at three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, someone was to touch the button that would send the electric spark through the fire and explode the powder. 'Who do you think touched the button? A wee little girl, the daughter of the chief engineer. Ten minutes before three the little girl took her seat before the button and held her finger above it and watched the clock. Ten minutes to three, nine minutes to three, eight minutes to three, seven minutes to three, six minutes to three, five minutes to three, four minutes to three, three minutes to three, two minutes to three, one minute to three. THREE, she touched the button (*all this time I was sitting in a chair with my finger above an imaginary button, and just at three I put my finger down and touched it*) and Hell Gate blew up. Who blew up Hell Gate?' Then came a chorus of answers, 'The little girl.' Then I went on to show how when a little child prays she touches the arm of God and the arm of God moves to do its mighty work."

Nehemiah prayed and God did through him what he never could have done by himself.

LEARN BY HEART.

Matt. 7: 7–11.

THE ROUND TABLE.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH.

Nehemiah and his character.
The situation at Jerusalem.
Had the people lost the results of Ezra's reforms?
Nehemiah's prayer.
What it teaches us about prayer.
What answer did Nehemiah receive?

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Thirteen years after the Return of the Exiles under Ezra (our last lesson). Nehemiah's prayer, B.C. 445, November, December. He went to Jerusalem the next spring, B.C. 444.

Place. — Shushan, or Susa, one of the three capitals of the Persian Empire at the time of this lesson. It is now called Sus, in southwest Persia. The ancient city has been excavated, and various inscriptions and remains of buildings have been brought to light.

Rulers. — Artaxerxes, called Longimanus (or long-handed), began to reign B.C. 465; reigned till Dec. 17, 423. Athens came under Pericles (444). Military tribunes in Rome (444).

Jewish Leaders. — Nehemiah, who became governor of Judea. Ezra the scribe had returned to Babylon. Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, must have been living at this time.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

I. THE NEED. THE SLOW PROGRESS OF THE JEWISH NATION (vs. 1–3).

II. THE MAN. TO MEET THE NEED.

III. THE PRAYER. TO THE ONLY SOURCE OF HELP (vs. 4–11).

IV. THE ANSWER.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Works on Ezra and Nehemiah. For varying views of the period, consult Hunter's *After the Exile*, Kent's *Jewish People*, Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. iii. On Nehemiah, see Alexander Whyte's *Bible Characters*. W. W. White's *Studies in Bible Characters*. Professor Soares' *Heroes of Israel*. Charles Reade's *Bible Characters*. Geikie's *Old Testament Characters*. On the "cupbearer" see Rawlinson's *Ezra and Nehemiah;* Xenophon's *Cyropedeia* I: 3, 8. On the motives of Artaxerxes, see Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. iii., lect. 44.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Trench's *Poems*, "The Suppliant." The little booklet *Expectation Corner* is a fine allegory on prayer. Longfellow's *Poems*, "Sandalphon." Whittier's *Poems*, "The Prayer-Seeker." The fine poem, "Strive, yet I do not promise." Tennyson's *Idyls of the King*, "More things are wrought by prayer."

1. The words of [1] Nē-he-mī'ah the son of Hach-a-li'ah. And Hac-a-li'ah. Now it came to pass in the month Chis'leu. Chis'lev. in the twentieth year, as I was in Shu'shan the palace,

2. That that Ha-nā'nī, one of my brethren, came, he and certain certain men out of Jū'dah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

[1] Neh. 10: 1.

I. The Need. The Slow Progress of the Jewish Nation. — Vs. 1–3. The scene changes since our last lesson. Ezra's home was in Babylon, Nehemiah's in Shushan, 250 miles further east, with fewer persons of his own nationality, and farther away from news of what was going on in Jerusalem. It is this separation of homes that explains why there was so little working together of these two men, till both had been at Jerusalem.

1. **The words of Nehemiah.** This is apparently the title of the book, or of this part of the book of Ezra and Nehemiah. **In the month Chisleu.** The ninth month = our November-December. **In the twentieth year.** B.C. 445. The twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign included parts of two years. Compare Neh. 2: 1.

THE MEETING OF THE BROTHERS. Nehemiah was walking one day outside the walls of Shushan, so Josephus tells us, when "some strangers, making for the city, travel-worn as if by a long journey, were overheard by him discoursing in his own language, — the Hebrew. Nothing touches the heart in a strange land more than one's mother-tongue. He went up to them, therefore, and, introducing himself, found they were from Judah; and one was his own brother," **Hanani.** (Compare Neh. 7: 2: "my brother Hanani").— *Geikie.*

Certain men of Judah, better, as R.V., "men out of Judah," who had just arrived with the latest news.

Naturally Nehemiah asked them about the state of things there. **Concerning the Jews that had escaped.** Those who had escaped being carried captive, or the descend-

3. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province [are/are] in great affliction and reproach: [1] the wall of Jerusalem also [2] [is/is] broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

[1] Neh. 2: 17. [2] 2 Kings 25: 10.

ants of those who had returned 91 years before in the first Return, or had themselves escaped from Babylonia and gone back home.

3. **In the province**, of Judea.

THE TROUBLES RENEWED. **Are in great affliction and reproach.** Doubtless Ezra's reforms in relation to marriages with the heathen, made the surrounding nations very bitter. The leaders on both sides were many of them allied by marriage, and for the Jews to repudiate their foreign wives, as if claiming to be so much better than their neighbors, must have infuriated them. It "struck the divorced women as a cruel and insulting outrage. Driven back to their paternal homes with their burning wrongs, these poor women must have roused the utmost indignation among their people. Thus the reformer had stirred up a hornet's nest. . . . It is apparent that the persistent enmity of the colonists, their misrepresentations and perhaps their bribes had resulted in instigating opposition to the Jews in very high places." — *Professor Adeney* in *Expositor's Bible.*

Hence these outsiders had attacked Jerusalem, and, after fierce struggles, had broken down the newly restored walls, and burned the gates with fire. (See Neh. 2: 11–15.)

"Their subjection to Persia forced itself on the citizens at every turn. The tribute imposed on them was a heavy burden to a poor community. Subordinates and their servants lorded it over the people at large. Jewish recruits had doubtless been forced into the Persian armies." — *Geikie.*

THE BACKSLIDING. All this was after the reforms of Ezra. Doubtless many of the people had returned to their old ways as we learn from Nehemiah's prayer in which he said, "we have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses."

YET THERE WAS A REAL ADVANCE, a real gain. There is always, and wisely, a reaction after every revival and every reform. They advance like the coming in of the tide, wave following wave, and each one receding in turn, but not so far as the preceding one. There is beneath the waves a steady onward progress.

Take a young person converted, or led to realize a choice made before, but unconscious of its extent or permanence. His emotions, and the newness of the new life become dimmer; and it is well, for after this choice he needs a long training and discipline. But the training would be much less valuable if he had not had the spiritual awakening. It is so with communities and nations. They must have the inspiration and uplift; but also the years of slow growth.

Summer showers are necessary, but the flowers do not need a continuous rain. The showers are not lost because the drops cease to fall. The grass, and fruits and flowers are the continuance of the rain.

"It does not rain rain to me, it rains daffodils and lilies."

We have in the history of Israel an example of the way mankind develops. A few, but increasing number, of faithful ones keep on striving to lift the world to a higher level. It is a long, hard, slow labor, against immense difficulties; but this is the way to success, the means of success.

A MODERN EXAMPLE. When Robert College was founded by Mr. Roberts of New York and Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, the famous missionary to Turkey, the project was opposed not only by Turkey, but by every European power except England; so that the founders could not get permission to build nor even to buy a site. Every possible effort was made, but in vain for nine years of unavailing struggle. Then all at once the desired permission was granted. For a long time it was a mystery as to what brought about the sudden change. It was by a remarkable providential combination of circumstances — a prayermeeting in Constantinople, the visit of a prominent New York business man, his family coming to the prayermeeting while he was sick at the hotel, the visit to him of President Washburn, his influence at Washington, a letter from our government to the Turkish government, a little boy's anxiety to see Admiral Farragut on his flagship just arrived at Constantinople, the arrival of Farragut just after the United States letter reached the Turkish government.

But the point that applies to our lesson is this, in the words of Dr. Washburn, president of the college for 33 years:

"The question has been put to me, sometimes, as to how I reconcile the fact that this college was kept waiting for nine years? Why was this long fight necessary? Could not the Lord just as well have established the college in the beginning as to wait nine years before he chose these agents? I do not pretend to know the mind of the Lord, nor to be able to answer that question; but one thing I can say, and that is, *that probably that conflict which went on in Constantinople during all those years accomplished far more for the progress of the country than would have been accomplished by the college if it had been secured earlier.* Everybody in Constantinople knew about this conflict that was going on. The idea of a college was a new thing. There was no such thing in Constantinople. There were great men, strong men, connected with the Turkish government; but they were not educated men. One of the most distinguished ministers of Marine that ever lived in Turkey was a man who could neither read nor write his own language. They had no idea of education; and so, when this fight went on, everybody was interested in it.

"Thus the very fight that went on created what you may call an educational atmosphere in Constantinople, and was actually the beginning, the casting of the seed which has sprung up now, after all these years, in this Young Turkish movement. It was then and there, during this fight, that the Turks came to realize the value and the importance of education."

From an Assyrian Tablet.

Assyrian King and Cupbearer.

II. **The Man to Meet This Need.** — Of Nehemiah's early life we know almost nothing. He was the son of Hachaliah, and it is implied in the narrative (Neh. 1: 2; 2: 3) that he belonged to the tribe of Judah. He had a brother named Hanani, who had been to Jerusalem. The birthplace of Nehemiah, probably, and the scene of his early life, almost certainly, was Susa. "We must think of him as a very young man, hardly yet grown up, handsome, well-bred, a favorite, highly gifted, with a position at court, opportunity to make his way, and such examples of possible success before him as Daniel and Mordecai and Esther." — *Prof. Willis J. Beecher.*

"He rose in spite of his origin to a high place by his rare ability."

HIS OFFICIAL POSITION AS CUPBEARER. When we first learn of him he was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes at the capital. The title "cupbearer" is misleading to us. It really implied that Nehemiah was a councilor, statesman, courtier, and favorite. It was not a political office, but one of great power and influence. The schoolboys who read Xenophon's *Cyropedeia* will have a good picture of Nehemiah. "The amusing episode of Cyrus and his grandfather's cupbearer is the best commentary we have on the position of Nehemiah." "Herodotus (III., 34) speaks of the office at the court of Cambyses, King of Persia, as 'an honor of no small account.'" "The cupbearers had a special privilege of admission to the august presence of their sovereign in his most private seclusion."

This position as "a favorite" gave great opportunities for acquiring wealth — even for an honest man. And from Neh. 5: 18 we learn that he had acquired or inherited large wealth, which he used for the good of his country. At the same time his position in the court was one of great temptations, which it took high moral courage to resist.

HIS CHARACTER. 1. Nehemiah was a true patriot. "It is easy to be a patriot when it simply means shouting for a great, prosperous country." — *Soares.* "A royal favorite, lodged in earthly paradises, he yet had 'Jerusalem written on his heart' as the English queen said that 'Calais' was written on her heart."

2. He was a deeply religious man, a man of prayer and consecration, God-fearing, true to his convictions.

3. He showed remarkable wisdom and shrewdness, as we shall see later in several instances.

4. He was a man of great courage.
5. He was resourceful, ready for any emergency.
6. He was courteous in his manners.

7. If any fault is recorded of Nehemiah, it is one which he himself reveals, a fault that for a long time prevented Alexander Whyte from loving him, — "and, worst of all, I thought him a man who was always well pleased with himself." This is doubtless an exaggerated inference.

Max Müller, in his *autobiography*, says that the story of a man, which leaves out his faults, is like a picture deficient in shadows, and fails to bring out the bright points of his character. "We want to know his faults — that is probably the most interesting part of him," certainly often very helpful.

See Hawthorne's story of The Birthmark, in his *Mosses from an Old Manse*, for a good illustration.

8. A SUMMARY. Charles Reade calls him: "Faithful courtier, yet true patriot; child of luxury, yet patient of hardship; inventive builder, impromptu general, astute politician, high-spirited gentleman, inspired orator, resolute reformer; born leader of men yet humble before God."

GOODNESS UNDER DIFFICULTIES. A heathen court, with all its debaucheries and temptations, all its luxuries, and opportunities for injustice and oppression, with its intensely worldly atmosphere, would seem a hard place in which to rear the heavenly virtues. "If," says Charles Reade, "if you or I or an archangel had been endowed with absolute power, but left to our own human wisdom, human and angelic, I am persuaded that neither archangel, nor you, nor I should have sent the Hebrews to Babylon to unlearn idolatry, which punishments, blessings, miracles could never effect in Canaan."

And yet if the man there is a victor, he grows strong by his conflict. In the seclusion of sick-room, in the solitary dwelling "far from the madding crowd," is found one type of sainthood, but another, perhaps better, is found in the marts of business, in the streets of traffic, in the press of household duties.

Thus George Adam Smith speaks of the training of Jesus at Nazareth: "The perfection of His purity and patience was achieved, not easily, as behind a wide fence which shut the world out, but amid rumor and scandal, with every provocation to unlawful curiosity and premature ambition." "The chief lesson which Nazareth teaches us is the possibility of a pure home and a spotless youth in the very face of the evil world."

"And the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, This was a man!"

III. **The Prayer to the Only Source of Help.** — Vs. 4–11. The first thing, the absolutely necessary thing, for Nehemiah was to find divine help, wisdom, guidance, for himself, and the source of power over the king's mind. For this he prayed to the only Being who could answer his prayer, and he kept on praying for four months, while the double answer was being prepared, — in himself that he, by deep thought, and new light and divine wisdom, might be fitted to receive the answer, and in the king that he might be inclined to do his part toward the answer.

No one needs prayer more than those who are influencing their generation.

BISHOP PHILLIPS BROOKS AT PRAYER. "A friend of mine, crossing the Atlantic with Phillips Brooks a few years before his death, missed him at noonday from his accustomed place on the deck and started in search of him. He did not find him anywhere about the deck, and, finally, thinking that he might be ill, he went down to his stateroom. Very gently he turned the knob and opened the door. Kneeling upon the floor, with his great, magnificent head lifted, and his eyes wide open, as looking away into space, was the great preacher, and this is what he was saying, with an agony of appeal: 'O God, give me power! O God, give me power!' 'And I closed the door,' added my friend, 'for I had opened it upon the secret of his wonderful ministry.'" — *Rev. J. E. Freeman.*

THE ENGLISH PARLIAMENT AT PRAYER. "Carlyle shows us five hundred English gentlemen, members of Parliament, who, upon the opening day, after taking the oath of office, fell upon their knees and besought God for their country. Afterward they healed all enmities, and, striking hands as brothers, forgave and forgot all wrongs and ingratitudes." — *Dr. Hillis.*

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day;
For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."
— *Tennyson's Idylls of the King, The Passing of Arthur.*

4. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven,

5. And said, I beseech thee, [1] O LORD, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, [2] that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6. Let thine ear now be attentive, and [3] thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and while I [4] confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7. [5] We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have [6] not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

8. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, [7] If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

peoples:

[1] Dan. 9 : 4.
[2] Ex. 20 : 6.
[3] 1 Kings 8 : 28 ; 2 Chron. 6 : 40 ; Dan. 9 : 17.
[4] Dan. 9 : 20.
[5] Psa. 106 : 6 ; Dan. 9 : 5.
[6] Deut. 28 : 15.
[7] Lev. 26 : 33 ; Deut. 4 : 25, 26, 27 ; 28 : 64.

1. That for which Nehemiah prayed was like the first petitions in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come." For his prayer was not for merely a few people and the city that were in danger, but for the kingdom of God on earth. The condition of things at Jerusalem was a dishonor to Jehovah and to his religion. The hope of the world was dimmed by it.

2. Note the four expressions of Nehemiah's intense earnestness (v. 4), — **wept**; **mourned**, a word in the original used especially for outward expressions of intense sorrow, as over the dead; **fasted** as an expression of his intense desire, and as aiding him to receive the answer he needed; **and prayed**, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" which "availeth much in its working," continued for four months.

3. PRAYER TO THE ONLY ONE ABLE TO ANSWER. **5. And said.** Note how the titles he applied to God were in themselves a plea. **O LORD.** In capitals, which in our version always mean Jehovah, the self-existing God, the God especially revealed to the Jews. But Jehovah was the **God of heaven**, the invisible, spiritual God who dwelt in heaven, as distinguished from the visible idol gods which were on the earth. **The great and terrible God.** So great as to inspire reverential awe in every worshiper, and unspeakable fear in his enemies. Only so great a God can answer our prayers, for he only controls all the forces and powers which can work out our desires or ward off enemies. Hence the propriety and the necessity of the closing words of the Lord's prayer, "For thine is the kingdom," etc. It is delightful to magnify God, so long as we remember that his goodness and love are as great as his power, his fatherhood as real as his omnipotence. **That keepeth covenant.** Agreement, promises. In their whole history he had never broken his word, never failed once to do as he had promised or threatened. Even their present condition was a fulfilment of his word oft repeated (see Deuteronomy 28—30).

For them that love him and observe his commandments. With whom the covenant was made, who fulfil the conditions on which alone the blessings can be given. To reward disobedience and forgetfulness of God is to put a premium on sin, and to increase the evil and sorrow of the world.

4. CONFESSION OF SIN. **6. Confess the sins of the children of Israel.** He recognizes that the cause of their troubles lay in their sins; God is not blamed for their troubles. **Both I and my father's house have sinned.** He had sinned with them in three ways. (1) He had some of the same spirit which led them to outbreaking sins. Good as he was, he was not wholly free from all wrong motive or feeling. (2) Every sin of every kind in his heart was related to the great sins of the people, and partook of the nature of disobedience to God. (3) He may not have done all he could to prevent the sins of the people. Thus are we partakers of the sins of our country. No man stands alone.

9. [1] But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; [2] though there were of you cast out unto your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set cause my name to dwell there.

10. [3] Now these are are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11. O Lord, I beseech thee, [4] let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who [5] desire delight to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's [6] cupbearer. (Now I was cupbearer to the king.)

[1] Lev. 26 : 39; Deut. 4 : 29, 30, 31; 30 : 2.
[2] Deut. 30 : 4.
[3] Deut. 9 : 29; Dan. 9 : 15.
[4] V. 6.
[5] Isa. 26 : 8; Heb. 13 : 18.
[6] Neh. 2 : 1.

5. THE APPEAL TO GOD'S PROMISES. **8. If ye transgress,** etc. "This is not a quotation, but a reference to the general sense of various passages, as, for instance, Lev. 26: 27–30; Deut. 28: 45–52, 62–67." — *Pulpit Com.* The fact that God had fulfilled his word of threatening was a proof that he would fulfil his word of promise. So that their very condition of suffering was an argument for believing God would help them.

9. But if ye turn unto me. If you will so act as to make it possible and wise to bless. **Will I gather them from thence** (Lev. 26: 40–45; Deut. 30: 1–10). This had already been fulfilled to as many as were willing to accept the privilege, but the blessing would be in vain unless the land was preserved for the people.

6. PLEADING GOD'S HELP IN THE PAST. **10. Thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power.** Such as the deliverance from Egypt, victories by Joshua, by Samson, by Deborah, the overthrow of the Assyrian army of Sennacherib, and every triumph God gave them during their whole history.

That God had blessed them before was an assurance that he would again, if they turned to him now as they did then: for he is the same God, keeping the same covenant and changing not. Thus David was assured that God would give him the victory over Goliath of Gath, because he had given him the victory over the lion and the bear. So all our past mercies from God are arguments for our trust in him in present trials.

7. His prayer had been so far answered that he knew what he had to do, and that the time had come for doing it. His prayer now at the end of four months, was for guidance and help and success in this crisis. **11. Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man,** who had the power not only to refuse his request, but to depose or kill his cupbearer.

IV. **The Answer.** — 1. The answer came through and in the man who prayed. So Jesus bade his disciples to pray for more laborers to gather in the spiritual harvest. The answer came through their own work in that harvest field. It came also in their being better laborers, wiser, more earnest, more self-denying, more skilful. In all sincere prayer one must be willing to do his part toward the answer. Frederick Douglass used to say that he often prayed for freedom, but his prayer was never answered till he prayed with his feet. Neh. 2: 1–8 shows the beginning of the answer, and should be now read in that light.

2. The answer was coming during all this time of delay. The answers are often long preparing. As one prays for fruit, and the answer is begun by the planting of a seed, followed by the nurture of sun and rain. But the fruit must grow and ripen before it can be eaten. Thus printing could not prevail till good, cheap paper was discovered, and each invention, as steam, telephone, telegraph, depended on our having other things to make them useful. The battle must be fought before the victory can come, and the victory would be of small value without the battle. We pray for victory over corruption, over intemperance, over oppression; it is impossible that such victories should be sent complete from heaven, but the prayer is being answered all the time, the forces are at work which will destroy the evil, the worm is gnawing at the root of the tree. "**Therefore the Lord will WAIT that he** *may be gracious unto you*" (Isa. 30: 18).

3. God often gives us answers not only different from what we expect, but far larger and greater than our expectations.

"Strive; yet I do not promise
The prize you dream of to-day
Will not fade when you think to grasp it,
And melt in your hand away;
But another and holier treasure,
You would now, perchance, disdain,
Will come when your toil is over,
And pay you for all your pain.

"Wait, yet I do not tell you
The hour you long for now
Will not come with its radiance vanished,
And a shadow upon its brow;
Yet far through the misty future,
With a crown of starry light,
An hour of joy you know not
Is winging her silent flight.

"Pray; though the gift you ask for
May never comfort your fears,
May never repay your pleading,
Yet pray, and with hopeful tears;
An answer, not that you long for,
But diviner, will come one day;
Your eyes are too dim to see it,
Yet strive, and wait, and pray." — *Anon.*

Faith "reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No,'
She sees the Best that glimmers through the Worst,
She feels the sun is hid but for a night."
— *Tennyson's Ancient Sage.*

LESSON X. — December 3.

NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM.

Nehemiah 4.

PRINT vs. 6-18. COMMIT vs. 16, 17. READ Nehemiah 2—4.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*** — 1 COR. 16: 13.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

An exercise on a map will furnish the teacher a good introduction to this lesson, making the whole story real.

Have the scholars trace the route from their own home to Shushan, naming the waters through which they would sail and the countries through which they must travel.

Then let them go with Nehemiah on his journey from Shushan to Jerusalem, giving the modern names of the countries, to what government they belong, and the differences between modern and ancient travel.

They can get postage stamps of each country; find incidents ancient or modern connected with the places; and discoveries in their ruins.

There can also be references to modern cities ruined by fire as Chicago, or by earthquake as Messina, and their rebuilding.

These things, very briefly done, will give vividness and reality to the lesson.

LEARN BY HEART.

Isa. 61: 3; Psalm 130.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

Nehemiah's interview with Artaxerxes.
His journey to Jerusalem, with escort.
His midnight investigation.
Each one building over against his own house.
Watching and working.
Gashmu saith it.
The people had a mind to work.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Nehemiah heard the bad news from Jerusalem early in December, B.C. 445.

For four months he prayed, thought and waited.

The following April (444) he obtained permission to go to Jerusalem.

The journey occupied four months and he arrived at Jerusalem in the first day of the fifth month, Ab = July-Aug. (In 1911 the first day of Ab was August 6; in 1916 it will be July 12.)

Place. — Shushan and Jerusalem.

Rulers. — Artaxerxes, Emperor of Persian Empire; Nehemiah, governor of Judea; Ezra, the scribe, the religious leader of the people in Babylon.

Classic History.— Pericles at Athens at this time, and "at Rome the conflict between the Patricians and the Plebeians was being waged; the deposition of the Decemvirs had occurred only four years before."

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: Building up the Walls of the Kingdom of God.

I. NEHEMIAH SENT OFFICIALLY TO JERUSALEM (2: 1–11).

II. MIDNIGHT INVESTIGATIONS (2: 12–15).

III. REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM (chapters 3, 4).

IV. OVERCOMING OBSTACLES (vs. 7–18).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The works referred to in the last lesson. Prof. Geo. Adam Smith's *Jerusalem*, vol. 1. "The Walls of Jerusalem."

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

The Tract *Parley the Porter* is a capital illustration on watching. Xenophon's *Cyropedeia*, 1. 3: 8, 9, 11.

LESSON IN ART.

Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem, artist unknown.* *Nehemiah Viewing Walls Secretly*, Doré.

*Wilde's Bible Pictures.

I. **Nehemiah Sent Officially to Jerusalem.** — Neh. 2: 1–11. When the right time came, and Nehemiah's heart was burning with sorrow and desire, he found "opportunities concealed in apparent hindrances." It was dangerous to show sorrow in the presence of the king. "Even a modern autocrat like Louis XIV. expected everybody's face to shine if he did but appear, and how much more an Artaxerxes. What, wear a sorrowful face when he was presiding over joy and gaiety, and gilding them with his presence? If he had ordered this melancholy visage away to prison or death it would have been justified by precedent." — *Charles Reade.*

A gloomy face might mean disaffection against the king. The light of his favor ought to be enough to drive all sadness away. Shakespeare's Cæsar knew the security of cheerful associates when he said:—

> "Let me have men about me that are fat;
> Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights:
> Yond' Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
> He thinks too much; such men are dangerous."

Nehemiah had hitherto been able to keep a smiling face when before the king; but one day at a superb banquet when the queen was dining with her husband (Neh. 2: 6), amid, as Charles Reade describes it, "gold plate, gorgeous silk dresses of every hue, marble pillars, fountains, music, lights, sultanas, courtiers resplendent as the sun, and all worshiping their sun Artaxerxes, smiling when he smiled," his sorrow shone through his face in spite of himself so that the king noticed it, and said: "**Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this *is* nothing *else* but sorrow of heart.**

"**Then he was very sore afraid, And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?**

"**Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?**"

With a silent prayer unto the God of heaven he "**said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.**"

The king was pleased to grant his request, made him the Tirshatha, or governor of Judea, "royal agent" or "plenipotentiary" with full powers. He traveled to Judea in state with a military guard of cavalry, and with letters to the rulers of the neighboring provinces to give him whatever he needed for his work.

NOTE that Ezra had refused to ask for an escort, because to do so, in his case, after his profession, would have seemed to the heathen a distrust of God. Nehemiah, with equal faith, accepted of an escort, the use of means being one proof of faith, not a proof of unbelief. His position and his wealth and his retinue were among the powers through which he could attain success. The general, the high officer, when going into other countries, especially in the less civilized, needs the visible expressions of his power. But the minister, the scribe, whose power is spiritual and not political, must show his authority by

the fruits of spiritual power, by his character, his good deeds, his heavenly spirit, his love and helpfulness.

The governors of the provinces beyond the river Euphrates were far from pleased with the royal ambassador with his full powers. But the Jews had great reason to welcome him even though he seems to have arrived unannounced some time in July, 444.

NOTE that Nehemiah even after praying for four months, used "ejaculatory prayer, the soul's best weapons" at the instant of his greatest crisis. "He did not answer the king out of his own head and pray for wisdom six hours afterward. He prayed standing on the spot, and like a skilful gunner shot the occasion flying." — *Charles Reade.*

"New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward who would keep abreast of Truth.
Lo, before us gleam her camp fires! We ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea."

II. **Midnight Investigations.** — Neh. 2: 12–15. Nehemiah was very wise. "He lay quiet for three days, doing nothing, but learning everything." He showed no credentials, he proposed no plans, he told no one what he hoped to do. His first business was to learn the whole situation, the feelings of the people, who would oppose, and who would help, how able the people were, what obstacles must be overcome.

NOTE. Nehemiah presents a wise lesson to new comers in a church or Sunday school, — a new pastor, a new superintendent. When I was planning to go to India as a missionary, a veteran missionary gave me one of the best pieces of advice I ever received,— "never criticize the mission, or the work, or the methods, nor attempt to make any changes, till you have been on the ground a year." Study the new situation first. The advice has served me well many a time, and grows wiser with each experience. Nehemiah did not need so much time, but he took what was necessary.

At the end of three days he rode at night unobserved, with a few devoted followers on foot, out of one of the gates of the city, probably the same as the modern Jaffa gate, and turned south into the valley of Hinnom, by the pool of Siloam and up the valley of the Kidron east of the city, and then turned westward, north of the city, to his starting place. Thus he made a survey of the walls around the entire city. The Kidron valley was so blocked up with rubbish that he had to leave his mule and walk. But his investigations showed him just what must be done, and how to do it.

PERSONAL INVESTIGATION. As Nehemiah made a personal investigation of the situation, so should we examine ourselves; like a merchant, take account of stock; like a sea captain, calculate our exact position on the voyage to holiness and heaven; see clearly what ought to be done, the errors to be corrected, the places to be renewed, the forces with which we can work. So every church and Sunday school should do what Nehemiah did, and learn their exact situation; should take a census and know who attend and who do not, who have been neglected, who can be reached, what influences can be brought to bear, and what plans will be most successful.

SEEING EVIL FROM THE CURATIVE STANDPOINT. I once asked a doctor how it was that he could be living among so many and terrible diseases, and yet not be overwhelmed by them. His reply was that he looked at disease from the "*curative* standpoint." He was not so much an optimist, as what George Eliot calls a "*Meliorist*," one who is trying to make things better. This is what Nehemiah did. He was a meliorist. The evils he saw stirred his soul with a burning enthusiasm to remove them.

A young girl "put down Sherlock Holmes with a long sigh of regret. 'I wish I were a man. I'd be a detective.' 'Why not be a woman, and a detective? . . . There are a great many women detectives. Some of them specialize on dirt; they could "run down" a speck of dust in the dark; others are remarkably skilful in seeing the faults of other people. That, I am bound to say, is a cheap form of detection — almost anybody can learn to do it in three lessons.

"'But there's another splendid variety of detective — *the one who can always find beautiful things in people no matter how disagreeable they seem to others.*'" These are the real seers of life. It is a splendid genius to do thus. It is this way of looking at the people and the institutions around us, that will enable us to do most effective service in reform, as Nehemiah reformed the walls of Jerusalem.—*Suggested by a paragraph in the Epworth Era.*

III. **Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem.** — Nehemiah 3 and 4. The next morning, apparently, Nehemiah met the rulers, nobles, priests, and the people, and told them of his purpose in coming, how he had learned of their need, how he had wept and fasted and prayed, and how God had heard his prayer and caused the great emperor to favor his plans,

give him permission to come, and authority, with orders for the surrounding rulers to give the needed help. He told them of his midnight investigations.

And he said: "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."

For, as Stanley says, "in those days, rather one may say in those countries, of disorder, a city without locked gates and lofty walls was no city at all."

The people replied: "Let us rise up and build."

"Nehemiah," says Professor Adeney, "brought no new laborers; but he brought what was better, the one essential requisite for every great enterprise — an inspiration. He brought what the world most needs in every age." "It was like the magic horn that awoke the inmates of the enchanted castle. The spell was broken. The long, listless torpor of the Jews gave place to hope and energy."

NOTE that the plan and method of Nehemiah are an example for us in building up the kingdom of God, in churches, Sunday schools, societies, and should be noted carefully.

FIRST. THE BUSINESS SIDE OF RELIGION should be done as Nehemiah did it in the most skilful and most ideal business manner. "Nehemiah had a layman's good sense in religion. Walls were necessary to the safety and glory of the city. They were also necessary to true religion." — *Charles Reade.* The division of labor, the noble competition, the interest in their work that kept them from taking time to even put off their clothes, the giving each his own work, and over against his own house, the union of watching and praying and working, the working together of old and young, rich and poor, form a real "master-stroke of genius" as we shall see.

SECOND. THE UNITY OF THE LABORERS. Nehemiah spelled "We" with an "I" in it. He did more than any one else. He did not say "Go," but "Come." He supported himself, he gave liberally, he braved danger, he worked night and day. Every class of society, every district in the country, took part in the work. Nobles, priests, Levites, corporations or guilds, as of merchants and goldsmiths, women, families, helped, not only with their money, but with their hands, side by side with the poorest laborer. It is the spirit with which it is done that ennobles labor. The doctor, the nurse, the mother, the scientist, the engineer, are continually doing with their own hands more disagreeable work than falls to the lot of most workmen.

THIRD. THE DIVISION OF LABOR. The wall was parceled out among 44 working parties. (*Rawlinson.*) They are named in chapter III. "It was like the rebuilding of the wall of Athens after the invasion of Xerxes, like the building of the walls of Edinburgh after the battle of Flodden." — *Stanley.* This plan made each one more earnest and faithful as he saw what others were doing. "It animated the work with a noble emulation, and a personal pride. 'See how fast my work goes on!' 'See how well my piece is done!' 'Now, my sons, gird up your tunic, or Rephaiah the son of Hur will get ahead of us.'" True emulation is to do better than we have done; to seek, not to get beyond others, but to rise to the best possible for us; and to be inspired to this by seeing what others have done.

ILLUSTRATION. As I was entering a certain church one Sunday a witty friend of mine told this story as an explanation of the reason why that church was not as successful as it might be. Several young men planned an excursion and picnic at a certain small lake, and each one was to bring a bottle of wine to be poured into a common receptacle. One of them, a bright but economical young man, conceived the idea of bringing a bottle of water for his share, believing it would not be missed in the large quantity of wine. But it seems that every other one was as bright as he. And there was no wine: which was good for their temperance habits, but bad for their honesty. So many are willing to let others give, and others work, while they themselves only urge that something ought to be done.

FOURTH. EACH WORKED OVER AGAINST HIS OWN HOUSE, and thus all was done. Each piece of work would be ever before the builder as an example of what he was, an encouragement, or a reproof. It was his memorial. The honor of well-doing or the disgrace of ill-doing clung to him who did it, and affected his credit and his influence.

ILLUSTRATION. A member of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia once related the following dream. "I dreamed that the whole Society of Friends were collected in our great meeting-house, and attending to the business of the church. The subject under discussion was the filthy condition of the meeting-house, and the means of cleansing it. Many plans were proposed and discussed by the prominent members, who sat in the upper seats; but none seemed likely to answer the purpose till one little man, who occupied a seat on the floor of the house, and had not taken part in the discussion, got up and said, 'Friends, I think that if each one of us would take a broom, and sweep immediately around his own

6. So built we / we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half / *the height* thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7. But it came to pass *that* / *that,* [1] when Săn-băl'lat, and To-bī'ah, and the A-rā'bĭ-ans, and the Am'mŏn-ītes, and the Ash'dŏd-ītes, heard that [a] the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem were made up / went forward, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth;

8. And / and they [2] conspired all of them together to come and to / and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. / cause confusion therein.

9. Nevertheless / But [3] we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

[1] V. 1.
[2] Psa. 83: 3, 4, 5.
[3] Psa. 50: 15.
[a] Heb., *healing went up upon the walls.*

seat, the meeting-house would be cleaned.'" There are many applications to modern times.

FIFTH. They used the material at hand, the remains of the old wall. Into the new they put all they could of the old, only arranged to meet their present wants.

The only wise and successful way of progress in Christian truth and methods of work, is not to thrust aside the old with sneers and slurs, as so many are doing, but to build the new on all the good there was in the old.

"All the good the old time had
Remains to make our own time glad."

SIXTH. The success of the enterprise was assured by the fact that the people "had a mind to work." (Neh. 4: 6.)

Professor Thomson tells us of "that remarkable physiological power of what is called 'interest' to resist either bodily exhaustion or decay. If a man expended the same amount of muscular exertion sawing wood which he does climbing rocks or wading streams after trout he would faint dead away." Those who have interest in their work, who enter into it with the delight and zest of play, can do their best and utmost of work.

In the Congressional Library at Washington this motto is written over one of the alcoves, — "To the souls of fire, I, Pallas Athenæ, give more fire, and to those who are manful a might more than man's."

IV. **Overcoming Obstacles.** — Vs. 7–18. No good work goes on to success without meeting obstacles. Evil does not fall without a battle. It throws slanders, ridicule, treachery, conspiracies, influence, discouragements, every possible hindrance, in the way of reform. Even some of the Jews were arrayed against their brethren.

THE SAMARITANS WERE OPPOSED. (1) Because the Jews had slighted them in the past. (2) They were rivals, and it pained them to see their rivals flourish. (3) For the Jews to prosper under God would be a slur upon their religion, and the higher morality of the Jews would disturb their conscience. (4) The building of the walls would prevent them from plundering the inhabitants in various ways. It took away a source of gain.

FIRST. A CONSPIRACY, Neh. 4: 1–3, 7, 8, 11. **Sanballat.** A Moabite chief from beyond Jordan, who seems to have been the Persian official at the head of the Samaritan province. A grandson of the high priest had married Sanballat's daughter (Neh. 13: 28). **And Tobiah.** "A chief of the little trans-Jordanic tribe of the **Ammonites**," and probably vizier or chief adviser to Sanballat. **Arabians.** The wandering Arabs of the desert. "The Arab would scent prey in the project of a warlike expedition." **Ashdodites.** From Ashdod, a Philistine city near the Mediterranean coast. "The Philistines were always hostile to Israel." Thus "all the flotsam and jetsam of humanity, the ragged edges of society swept up by the broom of the war god," were opposed to the rebuilding of the walls, and **were very wroth. 8. And conspired . . . to fight . . . and to hinder.** They planned to take Nehemiah and the city by surprise, slay the workers, and thus put a stop to the work.

THE ANSWER was watching and prayer, v. 9.

"Restraining prayer we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright."

SECOND. RIDICULE, Neh. 2: 19. These same opposers **laughed us to scorn. (Neh. 4: 1–3), Sanballat . . . mocked the Jews, "What do these feeble Jews?"**

10. And Jū'dah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come *in* into the midst *among* of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12. And it came to pass that, when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times *From* from all places, *whence ye shall* Ye must return unto us *they will be upon you.*

13. Therefore set I in the *lower places* lowest parts of the space behind the wall, *and* on in the *higher* open places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the [a] rulers, and to the rest of the people, [1] Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* which is [2] great and terrible, and [3] fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15. And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, [4] and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

[1] Num. 14: 9; Deut. 1: 29.
[2] Deut. 10: 17.
[3] 2 Sam. 10: 12.
[4] Job 5: 12.
[a] Or, *deputies.*

And Tobiah, like Remus before the walls of Rome, sneered "**If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.**"

THE ANSWER was trust in God, and going on with the work.

THIRD. DISCOURAGING FRIENDS. **10. The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed . . . not able to build.** Besides the hostility of the Samaritans the Jews themselves were becoming worn out with the fatigue of such strenuous work. Clearing away the rubbish was too much for them. "The higher the wall rose, the harder it was to carry materials to the top. The more stone they used, the more difficult it became to get suitable stone from the rubbish." — *Professor Beecher.* "The work was all the more discouraging if the bearers had no better implements than are at present used. If dirt is to be taken up, or small stones, it is scraped with a broad-edged, short-handled, heavy hoe into a flexible, shallow basket, and carried off in the hands, or, rarely, shouldered or on the head." — *Sunday School Times.*

These people had lost their enthusiasm, and complained to Nehemiah. Their disaffection was likely to infect the other workers, and aided the conspiracy.

FOURTH. A PANIC among the outlying population. **12. The Jews which dwelt by them,** i.e. the Jews who lived in the districts outside of the city, and near the territory of the enemies.

From all places, etc. The Am. R. translates, "They said unto us ten times from all places, 'Ye must return unto us.'" "Deprived of the able bodied men who had been sent to work on the walls at Jerusalem, these little towns and villages could not hope to defend themselves against the gathering foe." Hence alarmed by the growing hostility, and the knowledge that they would be the first to be attacked, they besought the men who had gone to Jerusalem to build the walls, to hasten back to defend their homes and families.

THE ANSWER. This message revealed to Nehemiah the plans of the enemy, and he prepared for the attack. And because of his preparation the attack was not made. Not to be prepared would be practically an invitation to the enemy to come upon them.

13. Set I in the lower places behind the wall, where least had been done on the walls, and hence most exposed to attack. **And on the higher places,** where they could watch the approach of an enemy. Rev., "in the open places," also exposed to attack. **Set the people, armed** for active defence, **after their families.** The men defended that portion of the wall where their families were at work, so that the soldiers need not be distracted by anxiety for their absent families. Those whom they were most anxious to defend were at hand. This gave new emphasis to Nehemiah's exhortation (v. 14), **Fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters,** etc. They were to **remember**

16. And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the *that* half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Jū'dah.

17. They which that builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with laded those that laded, *every one* themselves, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a his weapon.

18. For and the builders, every one had his sword girded [a] by his side, and so so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was was by me.

a Heb., *on his loins.*

the Lord, which is great and terrible. As He had shown himself many a time in their history.

15. The enemy saw that they were outwitted, and refrained from attack. "This was not the first nor the last time when thorough preparation for fighting removed the necessity of fighting." — *Professor Beecher.*

16. **Half of my servants.** His personal retainers, trained men, who had guarded him on his journey. They were divided into two companies, who alternately worked and acted as guard. They could not work in their armor. **Habergeons.** Old English for coat-of-mail, from "*halo*" (neck) and "*bergen*" (to protect). **The rulers,** rather captains, **were behind,** with the warriors, and in the best position to direct the work and lead the soldiers.

17. **They that bare burdens.** The carriers, who could steady their load with one hand and hold their weapon in the other.

18. **The builders** required both hands in laying the wall, so that they carried their swords by their side, ready to be grasped at a moment's warning.

19. The summons by the trumpet.

"We'll watch and we'll pray, with our lamps trimmed and burning,
We'll work and we'll wait till the Master's returning,
We'll sing and rejoice, every omen discerning,
For we know not the hour."

LESSON XI. — December 10.

NEHEMIAH AND HIS ENEMIES. — Nehemiah 6.

PRINT vs. 1-12. COMMIT v. 11. READ Nehemiah 5, 6.

GOLDEN TEXT. — ***The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*** — PSA. 27: 1.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

At the entrance to the old church of St. Nicholas, Paris, one of the most interesting carved figures is that of Saint Genevieve, the heroine who twice saved the capital of France by her courage, her constancy and her prayers, "who ought to be placed in companionship with Joan of Arc."

This most ancient effigy represents her as holding in one hand a lighted taper, and behind her on her shoulder is a demon with his bellows trying to blow out the light, but failing in his effort.

This is a good introduction to the story of to-day's lesson, where the powers of evil are making every effort to blow out the light of the true religion which Nehemiah had relighted in Jerusalem.

LEARN BY HEART.

Rom. 12: 19–21; Neh. 6: 11.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — B.C. 444.

The wall was finished in 52 days in August and September.

Place. — Jerusalem and vicinity.

Saint Genevieve.
Gothic sculpture on the entrance to the Church of Saint Nicholas, Paris.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

The Books on Nehemiah referred to in the last two lessons.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: How to Overcome Our Enemies and Hindrances.

I. ENEMIES WITHIN THE JEWISH CHURCH (5: 1–19).
HOW NEHEMIAH OVERCAME THESE ENEMIES.

II. ENEMIES FROM WITHOUT SET A TRAP FOR NEHEMIAH (6: 1–4).
NEHEMIAH ESCAPED THE SNARE BY ATTENDING TO HIS OWN WORK.

III. GASHMU SAITH IT. SLANDERS (vs. 5–9).
NEHEMIAH'S ANSWER.

IV. TEMPTED TO LEAVE HIS WORK FOR PERSONAL SAFETY (vs. 10–16).
NEHEMIAH'S DEFENCE.
ADDITIONAL LESSONS.

THE ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The completion of the walls.
The injustice of some of the richer Jews.
The surrounding peoples.
Why they were so opposed to Nehemiah.
"Gashmu saith it."
How Nehemiah overcame his enemies.
The lessons he teaches us.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

"Gashmu says it." Poem by George T. Coster, in *The Poet's Bible*. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, a scene in Interpreter's House. The story of Tyndale's Bible in Kenyon's *Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*.

In our last lesson we had a glimpse of the difficulties which Nehemiah had to overcome in accomplishing his great work, but the emphasis was on his work.

To-day we study the way Nehemiah overcame the enemies who bitterly opposed his work for the Jews in establishing their home and their worship, so that they might accomplish their mission in the world.

I. **The Enemies Within the Jewish Church.** — Neh. 5: 1–19. Some of the nobles and richer men had been oppressing their poorer brethren who were working at great sacrifice in rebuilding the walls. "No wages were paid for this work, so that many were thus reduced to the direst straits to support themselves and their families, and pay the taxes exacted by the Persian government." "Their misfortunes were brought to a climax by the condition of hostilities, which put an end to trade, and threatened town and country with ruin. It was impossible to obtain regular employment, and prices had gone up." Those who had a little property mortgaged their homes; and in this way a considerable portion of the property of the poorer classes, their grain-fields, vineyards, and dwellings, passed into the hands of wealthy money-lenders, who demanded high usury. Some, having no means to pay their creditors, sold their children as slaves. The hungry ones were threatening, if the grain was not given to keep them from starvation they would take it by violence, or surrender the city to its enemies. The taxes for the Persian government were

1. Now it came to pass, [1] when [it was reported to] Săn-băl'lat and To-bī'ah, and [to a] Gē'shem the A-rā'bĭ-an, and [unto] the rest of our enemies, [heard] that I had builded the wall, and [that] there was no breach left therein; ([2] though [even unto] that time I had not set up the doors [upon] the gates;)

[1] Neh. 2: 10, 19; 4: 1, 7. [2] Neh. 3: 1, 3. *a* Or, *Gashmu*, v. 6.

very heavy and exacting. The chief officers farmed out the collection of the taxes, both in money and in the fruits of the land. These under officers were the same as those called publicans in the New Testament. They were required to pay over to their superiors the exorbitant sum fixed by the law, and depended for their profit on what they could make by fraud and extortion. They overcharged, brought false charges of smuggling to extort hush-money, seized upon property in case of dispute and held it until their levy was paid, forbade the farmer to reap his standing crops until they had wrung from him all that his penury could produce. They were universally feared, hated, and despised. No money known to have come from them was received for religious uses.

Now these, who professed religion and lived heathenism, were the greatest injury to the Cause for which Nehemiah had come. It was against such as these that Jesus launched the sharpest lightning of his "Woe unto you, hypocrites." They are traitors to their country, their church and their God. "The church stands for the highest expression of man's life. . . . A church represents the permanent spiritual ideals. It embodies the loftiest human aspirations; a nation's best expression of its religious sentiment represents that nation at its best." Now whosoever in the name of the church, as a member of it, does actions contrary to its whole spirit, is the greatest enemy of the kingdom of God.

Says W. T. Ellis: "The devil has gone out of fashion, but not out of business."

How Nehemiah Overcame These Enemies. — He changed them from enemies to friends.

1. He rebuked them with burning indignation. He told them to their face the wrong they were doing.

2. He persuaded them to repent and undo the wrongs they had done: "I pray you, let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth *part* of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them."

Then said they, "We will restore *them*, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest."

3. He set them a good example. He refused to take the usual salary of the governor. He bore all the expenses of his retinue. His noble conduct made the names of these oppressors show black as the smoke of the pit.

"By pictured saintship I depicture sin,
Beside my pearl I show how black thy jet."

4. One of the greatest powers for reforming abuses is publicity. Let every man's name be on his deed, on the work he does, on every thing he says, on all that he owns. Let the saloon keeper's name be on the drunkard he made. On all the adulterated food, the dishonest work, the sweat-shop ruins of health, the unhealthy tenements, — let the name of the doers of these evils be written in blazing letters, like the fiery letters that flamed from the barrels of rum on which the demons had written the evils it would cost, and few would dare to face this publicity cure. Nehemiah shamed these false hearted leaders into repentance and virtue.

AN EXAMPLE FROM ENGLAND. "Speaking at the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury not long ago, the Bishop of Hereford said he did not see why, if a farmer were compelled to have his name on his cart, the owner of slum property should not be obliged to have a plate on each house saying who was the owner. That simple expedient would, he believed, do more than all their large schemes to improve the worst class of slum property. The House passed a resolution endorsing Resolution 49 of the Lambeth Conference, which urged on members of the Church of England practical recognition of the moral responsibility involved in their investments."

II. **Enemies from Without Set a Trap for Nehemiah.** — Neh. 6: 1-4. **Sanballat**, one of the leaders of the Samaritan community, and one of the bitterest foes of the Jews. In Neh. 4: 1, 2 he harangues the army of Samaria, and in great indignation he mocked the Jews who were trying to **revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt.**

2. That that Săn-băl'lat and Gē'shem [1] sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some *one of* the villages in the plain of [2] O'no. But they [3] thought to do me mischief.

3. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4. Yet And they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

[1] Prov. 26: 24, 25. [2] 1 Chron. 8: 12; Neh. 11: 35. [3] Psa. 37: 12, 32.

Tobiah belonged to the tribe of Ammonites whose home was across the Jordan, northeast of Jerusalem. They were bitter enemies of the Jews, and were incensed at the growing strength of the Jewish community, lest it outrival their own.

Geshem the Arabian, the chief of some Arabian tribe of the desert, bold, wandering plunderers of the more settled communities. They were probably the Arabian community established by Sargon, king of Assyria (B.C. 715) in the neighborhood of Samaria. He is probably the same as Gashmu of v. 6, and one of those who laughed the Jews to scorn.

They were opposed because they hated the Jews for their religion, and their profession of a stricter morality, just as a Boston councilman said the other day that he had no use for reformers; and as some men criticize the church by an entirely different standard than they apply to themselves. The growth of the Jews not only reflected on themselves, but interfered with their business dealings especially on the sabbath (Neh. 13: 15–22). Moreover marriage alliances were forbidden; and there was a distinct wall of separation between the Jews and the surrounding idolaters.

THE PLOT. **2. Sanballat and Geshem.** Two delegates from the Jews' enemies. "An invitation to meet and discuss matters with only two of the leaders would wear a friendly and innocent appearance." — *Cambridge Bible.*

Come, let us meet together . . . in the plain of Ono; a town about 26 miles northwest of Jerusalem toward Joppa.

But they thought to do me a mischief. Ono was supposed to be a neutral place and hence regarded as safe. But here his enemies could easily overpower Nehemiah and his retinue, and make him a prisoner or assassinate him. Or as Ono was so far from Jerusalem, the meeting would require Nehemiah's absence for several days, and the conspirators could take Jerusalem unawares, especially as **at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates.**

Four times they sent this message to Nehemiah.

NEHEMIAH ESCAPED THE SNARE, BY ATTENDING TO HIS OWN WORK. **3. I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come.** The defences were not quite finished, and his duty was there. And by doing his duty he escaped the danger. There was no use in discussing questions already settled. There was every use in completing his work.

"As Thebes of old, so has the human soul
Her hundred gates . . .

"Aye, and it needs strong guard at every gate;
Outside are roving, warring hosts of sin,
Armed to the teeth, who ever watch and wait
To steal unhindered in.

"There to lay waste the temple and the shrine,
To fire with torch, to rob, to smite with sword,
To ruin and make desolate this divine
Fair city of the Lord.

"Then, O my soul, knowing the fate that waits
One careless hour, a faithful vigil keep!
Set sentinels at all thy hundred gates,
Nor let them faint nor sleep!"

— *Mrs. Clara Doty Bates.*

A LESSON FOR TO-DAY. There is a continual temptation to-day for Christian workers to give up their time and strength to discussing the many theories and unsettled questions which are continually confronting them. All sorts of men say all sorts of things till it seems as if these clouds were obscuring the whole continent of Truth. This is true of many other things besides religion. Now the way to escape from these snares is to attend to our duties, to go to work for the Cause of Christ with all our hearts, to give ourselves to helping save our fellow men, both body and soul. For then we will use the essential things by which our work is accomplished. We thus test the working theories by using them. Those principles that bring results are the ones we want. We find out what they are worth through testing them by what they will do. Working for Christ and for his children is our safeguard.

5. Then sent Săn-băl'lat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

6. Wherein *was* wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, nations, and [a] Găsh'mū saith it, *it*, I *that* that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that and thou mayest wouldest be their king, according to these [b] words.

7. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is* There is a king in Jū'dah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

9. For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, But now, *O God*, strengthen thou my hands.

[1] Neh. 2: 19. *a* Or, *Geshem*, v. 1. *b* Or, *reports*.

III. **Gashmu Saith It. Slander.** — Vs. 5–9. The enemies "try to play upon Nehemiah's fears by representing him as engaged in heading a rebellious movement." — *Cambridge Bible.* **Sent . . . the fifth time with an open**, i.e. unsealed, **letter in his hand.** Such an open letter was then regarded as a public insult. It was unsealed in order that the people might know the accusations Sanballat was making. It contained the charge of treason against the Persian government, **that thou and the Jews think to rebel**; and the fact that they were building the walls was alleged as a proof of the charge that Nehemiah wanted to be king, and had employed religious men to say, "**There is a king in Judah.**" It was threatened to report this to Shushan.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ATTACK was (1) "The charge of treason [thus made known] would terrify the timid from active co-operation in the work, and decide those who were wavering to desist altogether." (2) The effect of the letter upon the people might decide Nehemiah to concede the proposed interview, because he would be compelled to rebut the charges. (3) Thus Sanballat would be able to seize the person of Nehemiah, and stop the progress of building. For Sanballat concludes with **Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.**

6. It is reported among the heathen, not by Sanballat and the Samaritans, who posed as friends.

And Gashmu saith it (Geshem the Arabian). "Foul whisperings are abroad." — *Macbeth.* This is a good text for a sermon on that untrammeled-by-fact gossip which ruins so many reputations, and breaks so many hearts. "Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco pipes of those who diffuse it; it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker." — *George Eliot* in *Daniel Deronda.*

"'Tis slander
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Out-venoms all the worms of Nile."

"Slandered to death by villians." — *Shakespeare.*

"If slander be a snake it is a winged one, — it flies as well as creeps." — *Douglas Jerrold.*

THREE GATES OF GOLD.

"If you are tempted to reveal
A tale someone to you has told
About another, let it pass
Before you speak, three gates of gold.

"Three narrow gates — First, 'Is it true?'
Then, 'Is it needful?' In your mind
Give the truthful answer. And the next
Is last and narrowest, 'Is it kind?'

"And if, to reach your lips at last
It passes through these gateways three,
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear
What the result of speech may be."

10. Afterward I came unto the house of Shĕm-a-ī'ah the son of Del-a-ī'ah the son of Me-het'a-beel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12. And, I discerned, and, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him: but that [1] he pronounced this prophecy against me: for To-bī'ah and Săn-băl'lat had hired him.

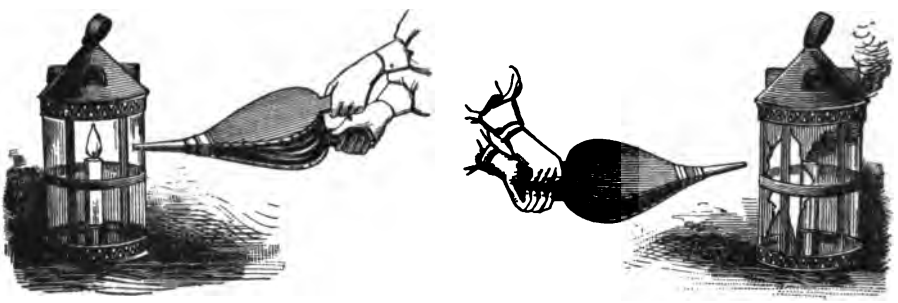
[1] Ezek. 13 : 22.

NEHEMIAH'S ANSWER was a flat denial, — 8. **There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.** And yet there was real danger that Artaxerxes might believe that there was some truth in the story. **They all made us afraid.** He would say, as many think now, that where there is so much smoke there must be some fire to cause it. But here, as often, it was the fire of an enemy's malice that caused the smoke.

1. The best answer to calumny is an upright life.

In Spurgeon's *Sermons in Candles* there is a picture of a man trying to blow out the light in a lantern by blowing against the glass, which is like the defence of absolute sincerity and uprightness. No blast of calumny can blow out that light, although it may raise a dust and smoke that may hide it for a time.

But when the glass is broken then the blast can destroy the seeming light.



2. Nehemiah's second defence was prayer to God. "One with God is a majority."

IV. **Tempted to Leave His Work for Personal Safety.** — Vs. 10–16. **Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah,** probably a priest who claimed to be a prophet, **who was shut up.** He apparently had shut himself up in his house, or in his rooms in the temple to be safe in case of the dreaded attack, and Nehemiah went to him as a leading priest to consult as to what was best to do in the circumstances, for the people were beginning to be weakened by fear.

His proposal was that Nehemiah should go with him to **the Temple, and . . . shut the doors of the Temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.** In his own fear he wanted the governor to go with him, where only priests had a right to go, but Shemaiah would absolve Nehemiah, for "the safety of the governor, he seems to say, is of more importance than a detail of ceremonial."

NEHEMIAH'S DEFENCE. "This was too base an appeal. Nehemiah indignantly exclaimed, '**Should such a man as I flee?**' 'What, a man entrusted with God's work skulk into the temple merely to *save his life!* **I will not go in.**' Talk of lines that sound like a trumpet; why, this was to speak thunderbolts and act lightning. Here we see in action what the heathen poet taught in noblest song.

" ' Summum crede nefas animam præferre pudori
Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.'

"(It is the height of wickedness to preserve life at the expense of honor, and for the sake of life to lose all that makes life worth living.)" — *Charles Reade.*

The very baseness of the appeal opened Nehemiah's eyes to the fact that Shemaiah was not a prophet, but a mere tool of Sanballat bribed to ensnare him. That any one could imagine that he could be influenced by fear, touched Nehemiah's heart to the quick. It was an insult that the governor could only put into the hands of God to wipe out.

But in the end the wall was built.

SOME ADDITIONAL LESSONS.

This story furnishes its own applications to our daily lives, and we learn from it how to escape from the enemies who assail us, and to bring a larger victory out of the attacks that assail us.

1. Every reform, every effort to change the kingdoms of the earth into the kingdom of heaven, every upward movement of man,— is opposed by many and strong and bitter enemies.

Look at Christ's career. Look at the beginnings of the Christian church as described in the Acts. A little band of poor, unarmed, obscure men, without rank, armies, learning, numbers, or worldly power, were to build the walls of the New Jerusalem, to graft the New Kingdom of Heaven on the old Jewish church, to transform the mighty heathen Roman empire into a Christian empire; and every worldly power was its enemy, customs, pride, wealth, selfishness, greed, prejudices, armies, thrones, — were arrayed in solid phalanx against them.

And so it has been throughout the history of human progress.

It is equally true of the progress of the individual from the child to a saint, from weakness and ignorance to manhood, usefulness, power, success.

2. We can overcome these enemies largely by the same means that Nehemiah used to overcome his enemies.

He rebuked sin, and demanded that those who professed religion should at any cost live up to the righteousness they professed.

He set them an example in his own conduct at great cost to himself.

He went on doing his work in spite of all opposition.

He was on guard against every form of attack.

He prayed as well as watched.

He refuted slanders, he ignored ridicule.

He never neglected his work for the sake of his personal safety. Every Christian should say with him, "Should such a man as I flee?"

In Paul's description of the Christian's armor, *there is no armor for the back.*

But the main thing is that while he took every precaution, HE KEPT ON DOING HIS WORK TILL IT WAS DONE.

3. We are reminded of *the value of enemies and obstacles if we overcome them.*

Mr. Howe in his *Letters and Journal* "stands as the man who said: 'Obstacles are things to be overcome,' and acted upon the saying every day of his life." — *Dean Hodges.*

> "Dear is my friend — yet from my foe as from my friend comes good:
> My friend shows what I can do, and my foe what I should."
>
> — *Schiller's Votive Tablets. Friend and Foe.*

"Did but a person know the value of an enemy, he would purchase him with pure gold." — *Abbé de Raunci.*

There are few people who would make a success of life without obstacles, temptations, difficulties to be overcome. Most truly successful people have had these enemies to overcome in their youth, and have gained the victory over them. It is for this reason that the sons of the very rich, for whom everything is done, do not have half as good a chance in life as poorer boys.

The enemies of Christianity have often been real helpers toward its purity and success, because they have compelled Christians to work, to guard themselves from error, to see the truth more clearly, to be careful of their conduct, to forget themselves in their work. It is the enemies, the difficulties, the hard duties that make athletic Christians and mighty churches.

It is the business of the church to overcome. The greatest blessings in all God's treasure house of blessings are bestowed upon those who overcome; the morning star, crowns,

trees of life, the paradise of God, the new name, a pillar in the temple of God, name in the Book of Life.

> " I cannot hide that some have striven
> Achieving calm, to whom was given
> The joy that mixes earth with heaven:
> Who rowing hard against the stream
> Saw distant gates of Eden gleam
> And did not dream it was a dream."

ILLUSTRATION. During the Boer War in South Africa, it is said, a company of English artillery had received a number of new Lyddite guns and were required to test them. Seeing a herd of ten goats in a field two miles away, they used them as a mark. After firing twenty shots, they went to see the results of their marksmanship, and found that instead of ten goats there were eleven; one had been born during the firing. And that is one of the comforts we have as we live in a very cloud of criticisms of the church, of the Sunday school, of education, of almost every good thing, — criticisms like the arrows of the Persian archers, so many that they hid the sun — that there is always something born during the firing.

A BRILLIANT MISSIONARY ILLUSTRATION. Rev. John T. Farris in that best of weeklies *The Christian Endeavor World* (April 21, 1910) tells the story of a man growing rich by giving his whole time to business, till he lost the power to sleep. His days were torture, and his nights were worse than torture. He could find no remedy for his insomnia, and he was going to pieces. He hated foreign missions, and would not let his family give anything to them.

One day in the train he overheard a conversation in which another business man told how he had overcome his nervous sleeplessness. He said he had wasted many hours counting sheep or fishes to put him to sleep, when he decided to put these hours to a better use, and began, when he could not sleep, to pray for missionaries by name. He began at Jerusalem and prayed, then to Syria, and Constantinople, and so on till he fell asleep. It did not require many nights before he began to sleep more and more hours.

Our rich man decided to try the experiment. He had said to himself, I would give $50,000 to be cured. He began to pray for definite missions. Then he had to learn the names of the missionaries, then of colleges, then what they were doing. At first he had to travel far before he fell asleep. Soon his sleeplessness grew less and less. When he went to sleep thinking of Beyrout College, he sent a check to them. When the journey shortened to Robert College, Constantinople, he sent them a check. He became deeply interested in missions.

Thus the right use of his torturing insomnia made him a new man, a larger man, a more useful man, and aided the Missionary Cause.

LESSON XII. — December 17.

EZRA TEACHES THE LAW. — Nehemiah 8.

PRINT vs. 1-12. COMMIT vs. 2, 8.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.* — PSA. 19: 7.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

Senator Albert J. Beveridge has written an inspiring little book, *The Bible as Good Reading*. It begins something like this, out in a camp in the woods.

" I wish I had something to read," said He.

" Well what's the matter with the magazines?" promptly replied the Other One.

" I have read them all."

" Well," said the Other One, " let me read you something out of the Bible."

" The Bible!" said He. " Oh no! I want some *good reading;* that's what I want."

The two tested it, and found that the Bible — with its Adventures, and Herostories, and Poetry, and Epigrams, and Orations — was not only good reading, but the best and most interesting reading in the world of literature.

But the greatest attraction of the Bible is that it is an Authoritative Guide from God himself. We are lost, ignorant, feeling our way, searching for light, and one who can tell us the way is as food to the starving, or living water to one dying of thirst.

So to the Jews in the midst of enemies, and perplexities, with the walls of their city finished, and the new life before them came the Reading of the Word of God, as described in this lesson.

LEARN BY HEART.

Psa. 19: 9-11; 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — One week after the completion of the walls in our last lesson. The first day of the 7th month, B.C. 444. The beginning of the civil new year ushered in by the feast of Trumpets. The seventh month includes parts of September and October. The 1st day of this month was October 4, in 1910.

The seven days' Feast of vs. 15–18 was the Feast of Tabernacles beginning on the 15th day of the seventh month, in October, B.C. 444, and continuing 7 or 8 days. Leviticus 23.

Place. — Jerusalem.

Persons. — Nehemiah the governor of Judea.

Ezra, the Scribe, a chief priest.

Artaxerxes king of Persia, including Palestine.

Herodotus is writing his histories in Greek about this time, 450–430 B.C.

ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The situation of Judah at this time.
The sudden appearance of Ezra.
Their especial need of Bible reading.
Why the people were so interested in it.
The several effects of this reading.
Why were the people turned from their sorrow to joy and feasting?
The Feast of Tabernacles.
The seven days' Bible school.
What do you learn from this narrative, as to the study of the Bible?

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: A Bible School of the Olden Time.

THE SITUATION AT JERUSALEM, AND ITS NEEDS.

I. THE FIRST MEANS WAS THE INSTRUCTION OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE IN THE WORD OF GOD (vs. 1–8).

II. THE SECOND MEANS WAS THROUGH THE TWO EFFECTS OF BIBLE STUDY (vs. 9–12).

III. THE THIRD MEANS WAS BY A REVIVAL OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE (Neh. 8: 13—13: 31).

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

Among the best books on this lesson are the *Expositor's Bible*, the *Cambridge Bible*, Kent's *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 2, pp. 205–214. Stanley and Geikie. Hunter's *After the Exile*, vol. 2.

ON BIBLE STUDY.

The Bible as Good Reading, by Senator Albert J. Beveridge. Farrar's *The Bible and its Supremacy*. For all who read the Bible for themselves, and especially for those who read to others, Professor Curry's *Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible*, is invaluable.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

Green's *Short History of the English People*, Chapter VIII., testifies to the marvelous effect of the Bible study revival in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Dean Milman's poem, "Be thou my Star in Reason's night"; *A Century of Bibles* (*Am. Bapt. Pub. Soc.*, 35 cents).

LESSON IN ART.

Ezra Teaching the Law, Doré.

The Situation at Jerusalem. — In spite of all opposition the walls had been completed. The city was safe from her enemies. The character and conduct of the citizens had been improved. The work itself had made them better and stronger. The Temple had been restored some time before, and was equipped for service. These "complete an act in a great drama of Providence, in which the courage that stands to duty in face of all danger and the faith that looks to God in prayer had been vindicated."—*Expositor's Bible.*

But these things merely meant OPPORTUNITY. They did not constitute a great city, nor a true kingdom, nor a holy nation, nor outward prosperity, nor a people of God. They

1. And all [1] the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street / broad place that was / was [2] before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the [3] scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

2. And Ezra the priest brought [4] the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all [a] that could hear with understanding, [5] upon the first day of the seventh month.

[1] Ezra 3 : 1.
[2] Neh. 3 : 26.
[3] Ezra 7 : 6.
[4] Deut. 31 : 11.
[5] Lev. 23 : 24.
a Heb., *that understood in hearing.*

only rendered these things possible. The great question now was how to restore the nation to its place in the kingdom of God, how to build up a pure, righteous, noble people, who should be depositories of the true religion, who should proclaim it by their lives and tongues, who should hold up the True Light before the world.

The Lesson to-day describes Nehemiah's plans for accomplishing this purpose.

I. **The First Means Was the Instruction of the Whole People in the Word of God. A Bible School.** — Vs. 1–8. After a week's rest from the severe labors of building the wall, the civil New Year's Day was ushered in by the blowing of trumpets, and horns with mouth-pieces of gold; and this "memorial blowing" continued all day from morning till evening, proclaiming a day of rejoicing, like our Christmas bells. It was to proclaim God's covenant, to sound victory over Satan, to sound a call to repentance, "as it were a blast to wake men from their sleep of sin."—*Edersheim, The Temple and its Services*, pp. 256–262.

On this day the people from all sides assembled in the public square lying south of the temple area, between the city wall and the temple wall, a space now lying within the Haram. So "in Rome the favorite place for public meetings was either the Forum within the city walls, or the spacious Campus Martius, sloping down to the Tiber, just outside of them. Out to this great meadow the people flocked on public occasions, and thither the magistrates came to address them."

THE SCHOLARS. 1. **The people gathered themselves together as one man,** including (2) **men and women, and all** the children old enough to **hear with understanding.** This is the true ideal of the church, — "all the congregation in the Bible school; all the Bible school in the congregation; and everybody in the whole community in both." And no church, and no body of churches, in any town should be satisfied with less. There should be a frequent and accurate census by a federation of the churches, for this end.

Into the street, R.V., "into the broad place," **before,** in front of, **the water gate** opening into the path descending from the Broad Place on Ophel to the Virgin's spring in the Kidron Valley from which water was carried into the city. — *Geo. Adam Smith's Jerusalem*, vol. I., pp. 86 and 199.

EZRA THE SCRIBE AND TEACHER suddenly appears at this time. Where he had been during the 13 years between his reforms (Ezra 9 and 10, Lesson VIII.), and the coming of Nehemiah to rebuild the wall is unknown. It seems most probable that he returned to Babylon, and continued his studies of the Law of Moses, and when he learned of Nehemiah's great work he also returned to Jerusalem, and was prepared to forward the religious training of the people, as soon as Nehemiah's work for their material safety was completed.

THE TEXT BOOK. It was the people themselves that requested Ezra to read the law to them, **the law of Moses.** This "testifies to a general knowledge of the existence of a book the contents of which, so far as they are known, agreed substantially with our Pentateuch." — *Prof. H. E. Ryle, Cambridge Bible.* Ezra did not originate this Law. The books of the Law, and the history of Israel had been scattered in separate books in various places during the distracted times of Israel's later history. Ezra codified, edited, brought together, the Law of Moses, and its unfolding during their history very much as centuries later the scattered writings of the apostles were united into our New Testament. But it was the **Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel,** a real Word of God.

THE CHIEF SUPERIORITY of the Bible over all other books is that it is God's word to us, a divine revelation. The thoughts, hopes, experiences of other men are very valuable to us. But the one thing we most need is the truth spoken by one who *knows* all things, and can speak to us with authority, not the authority of compulsion, but of knowledge.

3. And he read therein before the street / broad place that was / was before the water gate [a] from the / early morning until midday, in the presence of / before the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were / were *attentive* unto the book of the law.

4. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a [b] pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Măt-ti-thī'ah, and Shē'ma, and An-a-ī'ah, and U-rī'jah, / U-rī'ah, and Hĭl-kī'ah, and Mā-a-sē'iah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pe-dā'iah, and Mĭsh'a-el, and Mal-chī'ah, / Mal-chī'jah, and Hā'shum, and Hash-bad'a-na, / Hash-bad'da-nah, Zĕch-a-rī'ah, *and* Me-shŭl'lam.

5. And Ezra opened the book in the [c] sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people [1] stood up:

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[1] Judg. 3 : 20.
a Heb., *from the light.*
b Heb., *tower.*
c Heb., *eyes.*

ILLUSTRATION. There is a little poem in which we are compared to an engineer on a steamship down deep in the vessel where he cannot see the way; but he obeys the orders of the pilot, who is above and who does see. So we, ignorant of the future and its dangers, may yet follow him who knows all and guides safely.

"And so in the wearisome journey
Over life's troubled sea,
I know not the way I am going,
But Jesus shall pilot me."

It was this need of the knowledge of God's law, as they stood upon the threshold of a new era, and wanted to know how to make it a blessing, how to guide the nation to its glorious ideal and goal, that made the people eager to study the Word of God.

NOTE. THE NEW ERA. This was the beginning of a new era of Bible Study. Very few of the people could have Bibles, for they were rare and expensive. Few could read even if they had books. The reading and the teaching were chiefly by the priests. Now came the time of the people. Synagogues began to be established for teaching the Law in every town and village. The people must hear for themselves, and all of them be taught and trained in the Scriptures.

THE SESSION OF THE BIBLE SCHOOL. 3. **And he read therein** as described in the following verses. The session continued from **morning until midday**, about six hours.

1. **The ears of all the people were attentive unto the book.** "Were attentive" is an English explanation. The original reads: "The ears of all the people were to the book," fixed on that, listening to that only; not distracted to other things. This is frequently neglected in some Sunday schools.

2. On the platform were the leading people of the nation (v. 4). They gave dignity to the service, and probably aided Ezra in the reading of the law. It would be more than one man could easily do, to read for six hours so loud that many thousands of people could hear.

One of the greatest helps to Bible study in our Sunday schools is the presence as teachers or scholars of the leading people of the town. This is the best method of retaining the older boys.

Book of the Law. Closed in a case.

3. (V. 5.) **Ezra opened the book** (in the form of a roll) . . . **all the people stood up.** A respectful form of worship, which all earnest souls will imitate. It is sad to think how many boys and girls there are who pride themselves on their courteous politeness in society, and yet insist on being profanely impolite and discourteous toward God in the Sunday school. "It is not meant that the people stood during the whole reading, for six hours, from light to noon; they stood whenever the Scripture was read and sat during the explanations."

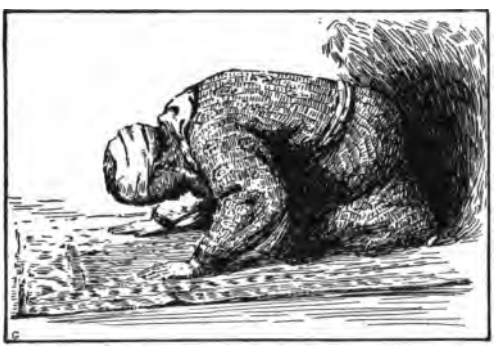
6. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people [1] answered, Amen, Amen, with the [2] lifting up of their hands: and they [3] bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

7. Also Jĕsh'u-a, and Bā'nī, and Shĕr-e-bī'ah, Jā'min, Ak'kŭb, Shabbĕth'a-ī, Ho-di'jah, Ho-di'ah, Mā-a-sē'iah, Kĕl'ĭ-ta, Az-a-rī'ah, Jŏz'a-bād, Hā'nan, Pĕl-a-ī'ah, and the Lē'vītes, [4] caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place.

8. So And they read in the book in the law of God distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand so that they understood the reading.

[1] 1 Cor. 14: 16.
[2] Lam. 3: 41; 1 Tim. 2: 8.
[3] Ex. 4: 31; 2 Chron. 20: 18.
[4] Lev. 10: 11; 2 Chron. 17: 7.

4. The opening worship. **6. Ezra blessed the LORD**, giving him thanks as the source of all good, and especially for his blessed word. The people responded with **Amen.** Then **they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.** No one can understand the Word of God unless he is in the spirit of worship; and that spirit will make him ready to obey as well as to know.



Worshiper, with Head Bowed.

5. The study hour in classes. V. 7 gives a list of men who aided Ezra in his teaching and **caused the people to understand the law.** And the **people stood in their place,** better "were" in their place, not "stood." The people were so arranged in groups or classes that the different teachers could best minister to them.

It is not certain whether Ezra or one of his associates read from the platform, and these other teachers among the people, repeated and interpreted and applied what was there read; or whether each of the teachers read and explained to his own group.

6. So they read in the book . . . distinctly, v. 8. R.V. margin, "with an interpretation"; **and gave the sense,** explaining any obscure words, and showing the circumstances in which the words were spoken, so far as these were necessary to their understanding and application.

NOTE. The description of good reading of the Scriptures in v. 8 should be pondered by all who read the Bible in public. Not long ago I had occasion to listen to a different preacher almost every Sunday for nearly two years. And in nearly half the instances, I should think, the reading was so poor that I did not like the Scriptures as well after the reading as I did before. It reminded me of the time when I went to hear a famous English author read some of his own writings. I was, and am, a great admirer of his books; but if I had heard him read before I had read them for myself, I never would have read them. It borders on a crime and a calamity for a man to read the best book in the world in a careless manner.

EXAMPLE. Senator Beveridge in *The Bible as Good Reading* makes one of his characters say one day when a perfectly charming story had been read: "Why, I never knew those things were in the Bible. How did you ever get on to them?"

"Why, this way," said the Other One. "Many years ago in a logging camp there happened to be nothing to read, and I just *had* to read. I had read everything — that is to say, I had read everything but the Bible. And I did not want to read that. I had read it over and over again in church and in my own home, and always with that monotonous non-intelligence, that utter lack of human understanding that makes all the men and women of the Bible, as ordinarily interpreted to us, putty-like characters, without any

9. [1] And Nē-he-mī'ah, which *is* [a] the Tir'sha-tha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, [2] and the Lē'vītes that taught the people, said unto all the people, [3] This day *is* holy unto the LORD your God; [4] mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, [5] and send portions unto for whom nothing is prepared: for this day *is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

[1] Ezra 2: 63; Neh. 7: 65; 10: 1.
[2] V. 8; 2 Chron. 35: 3.
[3] Lev. 23: 24.
[4] Deut. 16: 14.
[5] Esth. 9: 19.
a Or, *the governor*.

human attributes. But there was nothing else to read. So I was forced to read the Bible, and I instantly became fascinated with it."

From experience and observation, I agree with Professor Curry in his *Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible*, that very much is gained in understanding God's word by reading it aloud in our own private reading.

The reading was continued into the second day (v. 9).

II. **The Second Means Was Through Two Effects of This Bible Study.** — Vs. 9–12. FIRST. MOURNING FOR SIN. Comparing our conduct with the strict law of God always convicts of sin. When we stand up beside the perfect moral standard we begin to realize how imperfect we are. "It was once said, in sarcasm, of President Roosevelt that he 'discovered the Ten Commandments.' But every law of God has to be rediscovered from time to time." Every careful observer of moral progress has noted how many business customs and social customs, conditions of civilization, have been followed by good and sincere men almost entirely unconscious of certain things in them that are contrary to the duty of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Spurgeon's fable of the Golden Rule coming down from the cathedral walls and wandering, a stranger, into some business sections, has been realized over and over again. Some crisis, some moral revival, has made the doers realize the wrong, and some point of moral righteousness is rediscovered, though in words it had always been present.

So it was with the Jews at this time. The Law was read; so that the people realized how far short of obedience they had come, and how they had forfeited the promises conditioned on keeping their part of the covenant. The reading of God's Word brought conviction of sin. It showed their departures from the true standard, it was a mirror in which they saw their weakness and their sin; it was a measuring line by which they learned "how far and wide" they strayed. The terrible denunciations recorded in Deuteronomy (chapter 28) fell upon them as the law from Sinai amid thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud like the smoke of a furnace and the shaking of the mount, fell upon their ancestors, and they knew that they were guilty. Their present condition, their bitter experience of exile, the ruins of their city, — all testified to the truth of the warnings with a voice that pierced their consciences to the depths, so that **all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.**

And the sorrow and fear were the greater, for, as we learn from Nehemiah IX., the past history of their nation, and the effects of disobedience passed in review before them. Compare the effect of reading the same Law in Josiah's time, when the king rent his clothes, and wept because "great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us."

THE SECOND EFFECT WAS THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the other teachers, **said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep.** (See Lesson V. of Third Quarter.) You have wept long enough; you have fastened your eyes on your sins too exclusively. To see only sin and punishment leads to remorse instead of repentance, to despair instead of reformation; it repels from God as a mere Avenger, a Hater of Sin, instead of attracting to God as a loving Father and Friend, who chastises only because he loves the sinner, and longs for the prodigal's return to his home. 10. **Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet.** These were expressions of joy, and aids to joy. They had seen the threatenings, now it was time to look at the glorious promises to the repentant (Deut. 7 and 28: 1–14). **And send portions,** etc. Another way of expressing and of increasing true joy.

11. So the Lē'vītes stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to [1] send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had [2] understood the words that were declared unto them.

[1] V. 10. [2] Vs. 7, 8.

It is joy in action. It is joy multiplied by love. **Neither be ye sorry.** Sorrow and repentance are never required for their own sake, but for the better things which grow out of them. If one has repented and forsaken his sin, then it is time to rejoice in the better things, to see God and the bright heavens rather than his own past. There is no joy greater than that of forgiven sin, of the assurance that the past is all blotted out, of turning the eyes to God and heaven and hope and love.

HISTORIC EXAMPLE. Green, in his *Short History of the English People*, chap. VIII., gives a marvelous testimony to the effect of the printed Bible in Elizabeth's reign. "No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." "It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman. It was read in churches, it was read at home, and everywhere its words . . . kindled a startling enthusiasm." Its literary and social effects were great, "but far greater was the effect of the Bible on the character of the people at large." "One dominant influence told on human action." "The whole temper of the nation felt the change." "A new conception of life, a new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."

ILLUSTRATION. DRY RELIGION. "Dr. John H. Jowett, of England, enters a protest against what he suggestively calls 'dry religion' — that is, religion from which all emotional elements have been eliminated. In a sermon preached last summer in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, he said: 'We all recognize the dangers of an emotional religion, but there are almost equally great [yea, vastly greater. — ED.] dangers in a religion from which emotion is entirely banished. A perfectly dry eye is blind, and a perfectly dry religion has no sight.'"

For the joy of the LORD is your strength, "your stronghold," R.V. margin. "The joy of the Lord" is (1) joy that our sins are forgiven. The very reading of the law was to show that God desired to save them from their sins. (2) It is joy in fellowship with God, that he is our God, our Friend, our Helper. (3) It is joy in God's nature as expressed by the very law that condemns us, whose ideal is a transcript of God's goodness and love. (4) It is the joy of hope, of ideals, of possibilities, of a golden age, of heaven. (5) It is the joy of victory over sins, over enemies, over evil times. (6) It is the joy of doing good to others. (7) It is, says George W. Cable, "the joy of loving and being loved by God." "It is the joy of God's personal presence with us, and personal and entire care over us; or, rather, the taking of all our joys to God, and God into all our joys."

Such joy is our strength because we are stronger in joy than in sorrow. Joy gives courage and hope and free activity, and health of body and spirit. It fits us for the service of God; it is a safeguard against the allurements of sinful pleasure, and against discouragement in trying times; it recommends our religion and our Master to the world, and attracts men to them; it honors God. This is especially true of joy that triumphs over sorrow and trials.

12. **Great mirth, because they had understood the words.** They no longer imagined that the threatenings and curses were all, but saw the real feelings of God toward them, with his precious promises and hopes and blessings.

"It is the greatest mistake to represent the religion of the Old Testament as a gloomy cult overshadowed by the thunder-clouds of Sinai. On the contrary, its greatest offices were celebrated with music, dancing, and feasting. The high day was a holiday, sunny and mirthful." — *Professor Adeney.*

III. **The Third Method Was by a Revival of the Religious Life, and of the Means of Cultivating It.** — Neh. 8: 13—13: 31. 1. Through the study of the Bible they learned that one provision for keeping the religious fires burning had been neglected. The date for the annual Thanksgiving Festival, so long neglected, was at hand. They immediately prepared to celebrate it, the Feast of Tabernacles. This too was cele-

brated by study of their Bible, in a solemn assembly of eight days. "And there was very great gladness."

2. This was followed by a solemn covenant with God, to which the princes, Levites and priests put their seal. They promised to keep the law of Moses, to pay their tithes for the support of the temple services, and to keep the Sabbath holy. And they bound themselves under a curse to keep this covenant (Neh. 9: 38; 10: 1–39).

3. Nearly a whole chapter is devoted to the enforcement of Sabbath-keeping. The heathen might do as they pleased on that day, but they were compelled not to ruin the Sabbath of the Jews, and mar their worship, by coming into the city to trade.

AN APPEAL FOR MORE RELIGIOUS LIFE, FROM THE SECULAR PRESS. Not long ago the *Century Magazine* had an earnest editorial on this subject, — that the greatest need of our times is more and deeper religious life.

"All this means that religion is, after all, the principal thing; that a mere readjustment of ethical formularies is not enough; that a deeper note than this must be struck if we hope to restore the lost harmony to the human soul and the social order. There must be something to worship, something that kindles our purest love and marshals our highest loyalties. Nothing less than this will meet the social need of the time, which is a call for a radical change in ruling ideas, for a mighty reconstruction of ideals, for new conceptions of the meaning and value of life.

"The call is heard, as we have already said, in many unexpected quarters. A daily newspaper, published in Wall street, declares that there is nothing the country needs just now so much as a revival of old-fashioned religion. A daily paper, published in the interior, has taken every morning for a week the subjects of its leading editorial from the phrases of Paul's praise of love as the greatest thing in the world. The last Christmas number of a western daily journal had a brilliant editorial three columns long upon 'The Holy Spirit,' written by one of the strong journalists of America, and full of the passion of a genuine religious faith. These are signs of the times. . . . Heretofore there has been much protest against any close contact of religion with business or with politics. Now it seems to be assumed that nothing but religion can renovate brutalized business and corrupt politics."

LESSON XIII. — December 24.

MALACHI REBUKING AND ENCOURAGING JUDAH.

Malachi 3: 1—4: 3.

A CHRISTMAS LESSON.

PRINT 3: 7—18. COMMIT 3: 16, 17. READ Malachi; Nehemiah 13.

GOLDEN TEXTS. — *1. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.* — MAL. 3: 7.

2. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. — LUKE 2: 11.

THE TEACHER AND HIS CLASS.

The ordinary Christmas lesson, such as is given as an alternate for this lesson, is so familiar, that the more unusual one from Malachi may be even more effective. For it foretells the coming of Christ, out of the darkness of those days, shows the conditions on which we may receive him, and the spiritual and material blessings which follow his coming.

THE LESSON IN ITS SETTING.

Time. — Some time during the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, but it is not certain whether about 458 (Ezra) or 444 or 430.

Place. — Jerusalem and vicinity.

Contemporary History. — Alcibiades at Athens. The Peloponnesian war (431–404). The republic at Rome, governed by consuls and military tribunes. About this time Socrates was teaching the only approach to a pure morality which Athens ever knew. Herodotus was nearly through his travels (484–400). Plato, the philosopher (430–350), was now a boy, listening to Socrates. Xenophon (444–354) leads the retreat of the ten thousand back to Greece (400), which retreat he has immortalized in his *Anabasis*.

LEARN BY HEART.

Mal. 3: 1, 3, 16, 17.

PLAN OF THE LESSON.

SUBJECT: The Blessings of Christ Foretold. A Christmas Lesson.

MALACHI AND HIS PROPHECIES.

I. OUT OF THE DEPTHS CAME THE CRY FOR A SAVIOUR.

II. THE PROMISE THAT A SAVIOUR WOULD COME (Mal. 3: 1).

III. HOW THE SAVIOUR WILL REDEEM HIS PEOPLE (vs. 2–15).

IV. THE BLESSINGS THE SAVIOUR WILL BRING TO GOD'S PEOPLE (vs. 11, 12, 16–18).

ROUND TABLE.

FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

The Book of Malachi.
The circumstances of the times.
The choice sayings in his book.
The promise of the Coming One.
The Refiner's fire.
Giving Tithes.
The ideal and goal of the kingdom of Christ.

THE TEACHER'S LIBRARY.

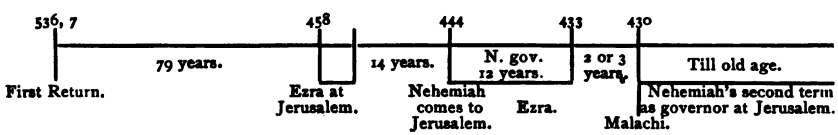
The Cambridge Bible, Malachi, by Dr. Perowne. *Expositor's Bible*, "The Twelve Minor Prophets," by Prof. Geo. Adam Smith. *The New Century Bible*, "Minor Prophets," vol. 2. Dean Farrar's *Minor Prophets*. Hunter's *After the Exile*.

THE LESSON IN LITERATURE.

On "The Book of Remembrance," see *The Stars and the Earth*, and De Quincy's *Confessions of an Opium-Eater*, describing an experience of drowning. *Wherein have we robbed God?* by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. On "Giving," see Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 17.

Malachi and His Book. The book begins with this title: **The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi**, or by "my messenger," or by "my angel," which is the meaning of "Malachi." Hence some think that the author of the book was an unknown prophet who was God's messenger. But probably Malachi was the name of the prophet.

THE TIME IN WHICH HE PROPHESIED. There is no certainty as to the definite time when Malachi uttered his prophecies, because no date is given in the book, and the sins which he sought to reform were present throughout the whole period of Ezra and Nehemiah, from 458 through the rest of the century. Most place him soon after Nehemiah's second coming to Jerusalem, between 433 and 430.



MALACHI'S METHOD OF PROPHESYING. He is plain spoken, and direct, without high eloquence, or supreme poetic power, but abounding in effective similes, metaphors and imagery which hit the mark, and do the work. What a London paper says of a distinguished man's straightforward speeches applies well to the sermons of Malachi: "A sound and healthy Gospel doubly welcome because 'the world is waking to the consciousness of intellectual and moral hunger which only these truths can satisfy.'

"He knows also that his preachings, if universally practised, would mean a regenerated world, and a large part of the effect they produce comes from the knowledge that he himself does practise what he preaches, and that the qualities he recommends he has himself displayed before all men's eyes with astounding results."

Malachi adopts a novel literary form, that of question and answer, in the Socratic manner.

1. A fact, or a charge.
2. The excuse from the people.
3. The prophet's answer.

Dr. Hunter in his *After the Exile*, thus describes it: "Socrates, who about this time was making war on the Sophists of Athens, displays no greater mastery of dialectic than Malachi. He starts his questions, puts an answer in the mouth of an imaginary opponent, then overwhelms him with persiflage, cutting irony, crushing rebuke. Nothing could be more spirited than his onset; it is the rapid sword-play of a skilled fencer; bout follows bout, swift

thrust and parry of question and answer, and, at last, the final stroke dealt with deadly effect."

I. **Out of the Depths Came the Cry for a Saviour.** — If we read the later chapters of Nehemiah and compare the sins and evils which Nehemiah labored to reform, with the sins and evils which Malachi denounces, it will be seen that both are laboring for the same ends, and realize the same necessity of reform. God was dishonored, and religion made a mere form and farce, by offering mean things for sacrifices, as polluted bread, and lame and sick animals, by refusing to do the simplest service in the temple without pay, by refusing to pay tithes for the support of the temple worship, by being weary of serving the Lord, by intermarrying with the heathen. In all these things they broke the divine law; they showed that their minds were all wrong; and they imagined that a heartless formal service was sufficient; they were worldly and far from God. Not all the people were guilty, but these evils prevailed to a large extent, and were leavening the nation.

All these sins and many more of the works of the Devils, and their natural effects, made the world that lay in darkness and shadow of death cry out for the light, for the sun of righteousness to arise. And still this is the world's need, — a Saviour from sin and sorrow.

II. **The Promise of the Saviour of the World.** — 3: 1. One of the peculiar glories of the Bible is that from the very beginning its Golden Age is in the future, not, as in other ancient nations, in the past. And as the Golden Age must have a Maker, God's Revelation soon brings into view the One, the Messiah who alone can make the Age of Gold which is the Kingdom of Heaven. Isaiah tells us that "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful,
Counsellor,
The mighty God,
The everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

So Daniel: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." And so many other similar prophecies. And now, in the last book of the Old Testament, about 400 years before Christ was born, the last prophet brings the same Hope and Ideal and Goal in the person of the Messiah, Christ, the Jesus who was born on the true Christmas day. **Behold, I,** i.e., God, **will send my messenger,** one coming in God's name, and bearing a divine message, whose work shall be to **prepare the way before me,** the coming of God himself. R.V. omits "will," = "I send." This Messenger, according to Mal. 4: 5, interpreted by our Lord himself on two occasions (Matt. 11: 14; Mark 9: 12, 13) was one who should come in the spirit and power of Elijah, doing the same work, rebuking sin, denouncing all wrongs, calling men to repentance, awakening the conscience.

It is possible that these words had a partial fulfilment in Nehemiah, a foreshadowing on a smaller scale, of John the Baptist who completely fulfilled the prophecy. Nehemiah's reforms were a part of the preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, and fixed the eyes of the people on the great Ideal toward which they were slowly moving.

A VISION OF THE COMING MESSIAH. **And the Lord, whom ye seek,** as your King and Redeemer, as the only One who can make your religion and your nation what you hope it will become. **The messenger of the covenant,** the one who brings from God his covenant of promise, including all the blessings foretold to Israel from the beginning, who shall make real to them all the visions of glory and prosperity the prophets had revealed. **Whom ye delight in,** whom you are eagerly looking for to bring you your desires. **Shall suddenly come.** The times look dark, but there is no doubt about his coming; and it will be in some unexpected manner. This promise was meant for the people of that time, as well as for all time; just as to-day the assurance of the final triumph of Jesus and his kingdom brings power and comfort, energy and courage and hope to us, as it has through all the centuries since Christ was born, died, and was raised in glory. And every new onward step, every victory over any vice and sin, every new sign of progress and growth proves to us that God's promise will be fulfilled. The promises are not "Ships that never come in," nor "To-morrows that never come."

III. **How the Redeemer Will Save the People.** — Vs. 2–15. FIRST, BY SAVING THEM FROM SIN. THERE IS NO SALVATION IN SIN BUT ONLY FROM SIN.

SECOND, BY A NEW RELIGIOUS LIFE.

THIRD, BY THE APPROPRIATE FRUITS IN BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT; A PERFECT WORLD ADAPTED TO A PERFECT PEOPLE.

2. **But who may abide the day of his coming?** Who imagines what it means? Who realizes the moral changes necessary, and is willing to give up his sins in order to receive the blessing? So many now think they want holiness and heaven, and all its glories, who do not realize what changes must be made in their life, in business, in daily conduct, before heaven can be possible for them. Do they really desire God's heaven? **For he is like a refiner's fire,** purifying the silver or gold by cleansing it from the dross which is mingled with it in the ore. This can be done only by fire.

And like fuller's sope, the old spelling of soap. It was probably in the form of lye, made by pouring water on the ashes of plants which contain alkali, which eats out the impurities while whitening the cloth. Modern soap which is made by a combination of oils with alkali or potash, was unknown to the Hebrews.

3. **He shall sit as a refiner.** The purifier *sits* or stands before the crucible so that he can fix his eye on the metal, and take care that the fire be not too hot, and keep the metal in only until he knows the dross to be completely removed by seeing his own image reflected (Rom. 8: 29) in the glowing mass. So the Lord "sits" when he refines his people, watching with patient love, and continuing the trial only so long and so intensely as he sees to be best.

"In large operations the silver is put into a crucible, and the flame of the furnace plays over the surface of the metal, upon which lead has been put. The result is that the base metals contained in the silver, together with the lead, are oxidized, forming a crust upon the surface. This crust the refiner pushes off of the surface, in order to keep the silver in contact with the oxygen of the air, which is the real refining agent. . . . When the oxidation ceases, because of the fact that there is no more base metal in the silver to oxidize, then the surface, yet in a molten state, is bright and clear as a mirror. Until it reaches that condition it has not been cleared of its base alloy, and therefore, if the refiner could not see his face in it, the silver would not be refined."

As these statements were made quite a number of years ago, I did not wish to publish them without the assurance of their truth to-day. Hence I applied to an expert in this business sending him the extracts, and he writes:

"The principles underlying the refining of silver by the method referred to, are the same to-day as they were at that time, and all statements made herein in regard to this process I should say are perfectly correct for an article of this kind. The temperature has to be carefully watched, requiring that constant attention be given to the refining if good work is expected. A man may sit or stand before the crucible.

"A technical man construing an article of this kind has to consider the terms used in a broad sense, and it would seem to me that the metaphor is an excellent one." — *Henry A. Wentworth*, manager of an ore-separator company.

4. **Then shall the offering of Judah . . . be pleasant unto the LORD.** The refining fires, such as they had experienced, would lead them to offer their religious services in righteousness, and God could accept them as his children and citizens of his kingdom.

5. Malachi now turns to a warning against some of the sins which render it impossible for the people to be blessed as his children, until they are hated and forsaken.

6. **For I the LORD change not.** The laws of righteousness and of right living cannot be changed, for they are the best laws, perfect laws, and there is only one way of receiving their blessing, and that is to obey them.

Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. God's mercy is as certain as his own unchangeable nature. His promises cannot fail, any more than his warnings. It was in order that his promises might be fulfilled, that he was refining them as silver is refined in the fire.

ILLUSTRATION. It is stated that two Jewish rabbis were crossing Zion Hill in Jerusalem and saw a fox run by. One wept at the sight, while the other cheerfully smiled. He who had laughed inquired the cause of the other's tears. "How can I help weeping," he replied, "when I see the threatenings against our holy city so exactly fulfilled?" "And for that reason I rejoice," said the other, "for the prophecies of its glorious restoration are equally plain and numerous; and as the punishment has been literally executed, we may the more certainly expect the accomplishment of the promises."

7. **Turned aside from mine ordinances.** The worship of God in the services of

7. Even from / From the days of [1] your fathers ye are gone away / have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. / them. [2] Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. [3] But ye said. / say. Wherein shall we return?

8. Will a man rob God? Yet / yet ye have robbed / rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? [4] In tithes and offerings.

9. Ye are / are cursed with a / the curse: for ye have robbed / rob me, even / even this whole nation.

10. [5] Bring ye all / all the tithes / whole tithe into [6] the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the [7] windows of heaven, and [8] pour you out a blessing, that there shall / there shall not be room / be room enough *to receive it.*

11. And I will rebuke [9] the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not [a] destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

12. And all nations shall call you blessed: / happy: for ye shall be [10] a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

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[1] Acts 7: 51.
[2] Zech. 1: 3.
[3] Mal. 1: 6.
[4] Neh. 13: 10.
[5] Prov. 3: 9.
[6] 1 Chron. 26: 20; Neh. 10: 38.
[7] Gen. 7: 11.
[8] 2 Chron. 31: 10.
[9] Amos 4: 9.
[10] Dan. 8: 9.
[a] Heb., *corrupt.*

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the temple, and other religious duties, whose object was to bring them near to God, awaken their consciences, inspire their motives and move their wills.

Return unto me, to my love, my service, my laws.

Wherein shall we return? they ask, unconscious of how far they were from him.

8. He answers by another question. **Will a man rob God?** That is what you have done.

They, still dull of conscience, ask, **Wherein have we robbed thee?**

In tithes and offerings, by which the divine worship is sustained. Can you not see this by the fact that (9) **Ye are cursed with a curse.** You are complaining of your troubles, and poverty and misfortunes (see vs. 10, 11)—do you not see that it is because **ye have robbed me,** tried to outwit your God and his eternal laws? Read what he says in Deuteronomy 28. They had expected to gain for themselves by so much as they withheld from God. The arithmetic was plain, "If I add to my store the grain, instead of carrying it to the temple storehouse, I must have so much more wealth for myself." If I work or play seven days in the week, I must have more of worldly good than if I work and play only six. That is the ungodly man's arithmetic, but it is not God's. Even the great steel works are cutting out Sabbath labor as a business proposition. The Jews left God out of the calculation, and in fact, they were poorer instead of richer. They lost God's favor; they lost his presence and blessing; a curse rested upon them for the promised tithes which they had withheld.

THE TITHES AND OFFERINGS were a tenth part of their income and increase of property, orchards, vineyards, cattle. These corresponded to our taxes for the poor, for education, and for the support of ministers and churches (Lev. 27: 30–33; Deut. 14: 28, 29). The priests and Levites were not only ministers at the Temple, but teachers of the people. These were due to God as the expression of allegiance to him, as the means of promoting his religion which was for the benefit of all the people. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord" of the poor. So that whosoever withheld them robbed God, robbed his kingdom of power and usefulness, robbed their own spiritual life.

Offerings. Free-will gifts beyond the required tithes.

PUT GOD'S PROMISES TO THE TEST. 10. **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse.** The chambers which surrounded the temple on three sides. These had been so empty that in Nehemiah's absence one of them had been fitted up for the abode of the heathen Tobiah (Neh. 10: 38; 13: 5–9, 12, 13). **And prove me.** Even if you are poor, and may have to deny yourselves, put me to the test, and see if my way is not better than yours. Yours at the best has been a failure. If you have doubts as to my way, you can easily solve them by the test of fact. **If I will not open you the windows of heaven.** A poetical and proverbial expression of the source of the blessing, and of its

13. [1] Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What wherein have we spoken *so much* against thee?

14. [2] Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, charge, and that we have walked [a] mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

15. And now [3] we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set built up; yea, they that they [4] tempt God, and are even delivered.

[1] Mal. 2: 17.
[2] Job 21: 14; Psa. 73: 13.
[3] Psa. 73: 12; Mal. 2: 17.
[4] Psa. 95: 9.
[a] Or, *in mourning apparel.*

abundance, like a copious fall of rain after such a drought as they had apparently been experiencing. **Pour you out,** "as if God meant that he would empty forth his vast reservoir of blessings." — *Cowles.*

13, 14. He urges the people to make the test because they have been complaining that God did not keep his promises to his own people, and permitted them to suffer all kinds of calamities. They did not see that God wanted to bless them, but they were not willing to fulfil the necessary conditions. **Your words have been stout,** strong, hard, loud, **against me, saith the LORD.**

"**What have we spoken . . . against thee?**"

Ye have said, "**It is vain to serve God**": **and** "**what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance,**" the outward forms of worship; **walked mournfully,** with outward signs of sorrow for sin.

15. **Now we call the proud happy,** etc. As we look around us it seems that the proud who do not obey or repent, are the rich and prosperous ones; and **they that work wickedness,** are exalted and successful; and **they that tempt God,** defying his laws and his religion, even they are delivered from the troubles and disasters which afflict us. Compare the Psalmist's feelings of the same kind in Psa. 73: 3–15, where this note of doubt is sounded from the depths of despair: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end" (Psa. 73: 17). The discipline of God's people was to save them from the evils that must come upon the wicked, and to lead them to the only enduring blessedness.

IV. **The Blessings the Saviour Will Bring to God's People. What the Coming of Christ Has Done for the World.** — Vs. 11, 12, 16–18. **I will rebuke the devourer,** the swarming locusts which destroyed their fruits and crops. **Neither shall your vine cast her fruit,** falling from the vines before it is ripe.

NOTE. It has frequently been said that there is no connection between disobedience to God, and bad crops and outward disasters, and that the prophets were mistaken in representing them as punishments for sin. But in principle there is often an actual connection between them in daily life; and if God is a personal God, as he is, he who rules all nature can easily make a connection.

There is a natural connection between religion, morals, generous giving, devotion to God, on the one hand, and a general condition of prosperity, on the other. They tend to cultivate those higher moral and spiritual qualities which are the source of material civilization, and which are the great enemy to the vices that are the source of poverty. But especially do they transfigure all earthly things, and enhance their value, and bring into life the love and joy of heaven. There is no greater prosperity than the privilege of having some part in the elevation of man, in the coming of God's kingdom, and in the songs of final triumph, and in the blessing, Well done, good and faithful!

So that **all nations** seeing how God blesses his obedient people **shall call you blessed.**

ILLUSTRATION. THE TWO MAPS OF THE WORLD. Suppose we make two maps of the world on the plan furnished by the United States census to show the degree in which ignorance, certain diseases, and many other things prevail, by means of lighter and darker shades. On one map we will note the countries where the purest Christianity prevails, by white. A darker shade will mark the more imperfect forms, and then let the shades grow darker and darker through Mohammedanism, and the various forms of heathenism till we come to the blackness of the lowest fetishism.

Then, with entire independence, make a similar map of the moral and intellectual condition of men. Where there is the most manhood, the noblest womanhood, the highest morality, the best social conditions, the most done for the sick and suffering, the most of all that

16. Then they [1] that feared the LORD [2] spake often one to with another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and [3] a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

17. And [4] they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that the day when I do make up my, even a [5] jewels: peculiar treasure; and [6] I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18. [7] Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

[1] Psa. 66: 16; Mal. 4: 2.
[2] Heb. 3: 13.
[3] Psa. 56: 8; Isa. 65: 6.
[4] Ex. 19: 5; Psa. 135: 4.
[5] Isa. 62: 3.
[6] Psa. 103: 13.
[7] Psa. 58: 11.

elevates the people, and brings the greatest happiness — these put in white. Darken the shades as these things grow less, till we come to the blackness of the lowest savagery.

Bring the two maps together and they will almost exactly coincide. Where there is the most Christianity, there will be the most of all that is good for man.

16. Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another, conferring together, encouraging one another.

A large part of our wisdom and strength and hope comes from conferring with others. It gives sympathy, broader views, new suggestions, correction of errors.

> "So when two work together, each for each
> Is quick to plan, and can the other teach;
> But when alone one seeks the best to know,
> His skill is weaker and his thoughts are slow."

Several parts in music add harmony to the melody. Several pieces of wood together make a brighter and steadier flame than the same pieces could separately. A pastor once gave an illustration to one of his parishioners who neglected the prayermeeting because it was so dull. He tried to kindle the study fire with one stick of wood, but it refused to burn. He put on another, and there came a feeble flame. Each added stick made the fire burn brighter, till he had "the multiform blaze" that "fills the soul with its rays."

The LORD hearkened, and heard. Compare Matt. 18: 19, 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name." **A book of remembrance was written.** "An expression after the manner of men, intimating that their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance as punctually and particularly as if written in a book." — *Henry.*

COMPARE the "Book of Life" in Rev. 20: 12; 21: 27.

17. They shall be mine . . . when I make up my jewels. They were very precious, they had cost him very much, they had been polished and refined with long and patient care, they, like all jewels had been made into jewels from the commonest material, as Ruskin tells us that common factory mud contains the elements of the diamond, the opal and the sapphire.

His own son that serveth him, the most precious of all jewels to a parent's heart. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

CHRISTMAS HERALDS THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST. Mr. William T. Ellis writes to the Boston *Herald:*

"John Wanamaker owns a painting of gigantic size called, *The Conquerors.* It is of compelling interest, and one returns to it again and again. There rides the bannered host of strong-faced men, who have dreamed the dream of world dominion. All the men I have indicated, and others, are in that company. But they ride through a lane of dead. Stark and stiff, two lines of corpses stretch on both sides of them. It was by pain, loss, sorrow and death that they came to their power.

"But imagine the Christ-Conqueror's triumphal march. Little children throng his feet. He rides, meek and lowly, upon the humblest of animals. The garments of the glad and the grateful strew his way. The hosannas of the healed and the happy rend the air. The lame leap; the blind see; the lepers are cleansed; the dead are back from the tomb. The line is longer than mind can compass, for there now follow in his train a countless multitude of those whom he has redeemed and made to rejoice."

LESSON XIV. — December 31.

REVIEW.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* — 1 JOHN 1: 9.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR'S LESSONS.

THE COURSE OF HISTORY, THE DECISIVE EVENTS, AND THE NOTABLE PERSONS, DURING THE 580 YEARS FROM THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM (982) TO THE CLOSE OF NEHEMIAH'S GOVERNORSHIP, AND THE END OF THE BIBLE HISTORY, ABOUT 400 B.C.

To go over all the lessons separately, one after another, to repeat titles and Golden Texts in order, to select certain truths we have learned — this is not to review. What we need is the movement of the whole period of the history, to study its meaning, to what it is leading, how each event, each character, bears upon this end, to help or to hinder, to see God in the history, and to learn the lessons the whole period teaches us.

REVIEWING is looking backward from some tower or hilltop, over the landscape through which we have been traveling. The hills, the valleys, the cities, the villages, the forests, the fertile fields, we have been seeing in detail through the quarter we now see as one broad country, and we understand the meaning and power of the land as a whole.

> "Oh, that I knew how all thy lights combine
> And the configurations of their storie,
> Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
> But all the constellations in their glorie."

USE OF THE MAP. The principal countries where the events took place should be noted on the map, their relations to one another, the modern names of these lands given, and the events in each reported.

SECULAR HISTORY. The Bible history is made more real, and more interesting, when the contemporary events of secular history are connected with it, joining day school with Sunday school. And often the secular history throws light upon the Biblical history.

THE MONUMENTS, the remains of ancient times found in the ruins of their great cities within the last century, add greatly to our knowledge and interest.

THE FOUR ERAS. The history we are reviewing naturally falls into four eras or periods. (1) The two streams of the divided kingdom. (2) The single stream of Judah. (3) The Exile. (4) The Return and Restoration.

I. **First Period. The Divided Kingdom.** — Judah and Israel side by side, a double experiment in the progress of the Kingdom of God.

This period extended from 982–722, about 260 years.

Judah's territory contained about 3400 square miles; Israel's 9400.

Judah's capital was Jerusalem with its temple; Israel's was Samaria, with two centers of false worship.

Judah was more sheltered than Israel from close contact with the heathen, both politically and religiously.

Judah had one dynasty of 11 kings and one queen, all of the house of David; and Israel 19 kings of 9 dynasties.

Judah had several very good kings, and great revivals of religion and reforms of morals; while in Israel from the first was a deterioration of varying degrees, with great help from Elijah and Elisha.

Year of Divided Kingdoms	B.C.	JUDAH. Principal Kings. Events.	B.C.	ISRAEL. Principal Kings. Events.
1	982	**Rehoboam.** Bad. Religious Decline.	982	**Jeroboam.** The King Who Led Israel Into False Worship. Exodus of religious people into Judah.
21	962	**Asa.** Good. Religious Revival. Decline at close.	936	**Omri.** Great Warrior. Name on Moabite Stone. ELIJAH.
62	921	**Jehoshaphat.** Great Moral and Religious Revival. Decline by alliance with Jezebel.	925	**Ahab** and **Jezebel.** Introducing idolatry. ELISHA.
			892	**Jehu.** Zealous Reformer. "Drives Like Jehu." Destroyed Jezebel and her idols. AMOS.
97	886	**Joash.** Temple Restored.	832	**Jeroboam II.** Kingdom Widely Extended. HOSEA.
245	738	**Ahaz.** Conflict with Assyrians. Sundial.		Rapid decline. Revolutions. ISAIAH. MICAH.
260	723	**Hezekiah.** Good. Wide-spread Reformation.	720	**Hoshea.** Samaria Destroyed. End of Kingdom of Israel.

The principles we have been studying apply to our own times, but are to be worked out in ways adapted to modern life. "The church is an army on duty, an army for the Christian conquest of the world by loving faithfulness."

There are great evils to be driven out of our country. The whole land is waking up to realize the need of civic righteousness.

There is always need of awakening new reforming zeal. For every step we gain gives us views of new needs, and new ideals.

EVERY CHRISTIAN LAND *ought to be a perfect example of the kingdom of God, and of the blessings that abound in it.*

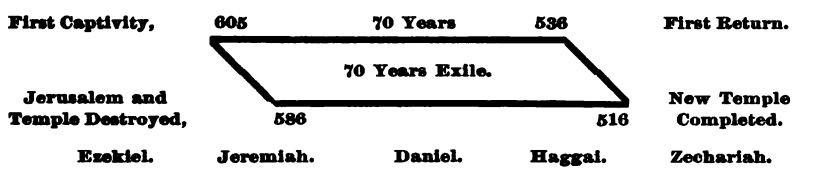
Every failure to live that life lessens its influence over the heathen nations.

II. **Second Period. Judah the Sole Kingdom.** — LENGTH OF PERIOD, 136 years — from destruction of Samaria 722 to final fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in 586.

Year of Division	B.C.	NOTABLE KINGS.	EVENTS.	PROPHETS.
260	723	**Hezekiah.**	Good. Remarkable Revivals, extending Prosperity. into other parts of Palestine. Destruction of Sennacherib's army.	ISAIAH.
289	694	**Manasseh.**	The Kingdom Degenerating. Persecution of the Prophets.	NAHUM.
345	638	**Josiah.**	The child king. Renewal of Temple. Book of the Law Found. Reforms.	ZEPHANIAH.
378	605	**Troublous Times.**	Daniel and others taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar.	HABAKKUK. EZEKIEL.
397	586	**Zedekiah.**	Last king. Jerusalem destroyed. Temple burned.	JEREMIAH.

EVERY FAILURE *from the perfect life, every moral wrong, every fall into idolatry, diminished their power for good; and it was necessary that punishment should follow such conduct, both to persuade them into the ways of God and righteousness, and also to show the heathen that only obedience to God could lead to the blessings prepared for God's people.*

III. **Third Period. The Exile in Babylon.** — LENGTH OF PERIOD, 70 years, 605–536 and 586–516.



A period of discipline, of sifting like wheat, of the refiner's purifying fire. The Jews learned their need of God, the value of his religion, the blessedness of the Word of God; they gained the broadening of their ideas, and sympathies, the increase of their culture.

Discipline, purifying in the furnace, the strength that comes from overcoming, is the need of all individuals and churches to-day.

IV. **The Fourth Period. The Return. The New Spiritual Nation.** — THIS PERIOD extends from the first return in 536 to the close of the Bible history, 400 — with an onward vision to the coming of Christ.

Year from Division.	B.C.	
446	537	**First Return.** 50,000 under Zerubbabel. Cyrus King of Babylonia. Settling in Palestine. Renewal of worship.
467	516	**Temple** completed. HAGGAI. ZECHARIAH.
504	479	**Esther,** queen.
525	458	**Second Return** under Ezra. New spiritual life. Reforms.
539	444	**Nehemiah** governor of Judah. Walls of Jerusalem built. Bible Study, in great meetings, under Ezra. Revival. Reform.
550	433	Nehemiah returns to Persia. Comes back to Judah for rest of his life.
553	430	**Malachi.** Warnings, Promise of a Redeemer.

Preparations for the coming of Christ. The forerunner. Forsaking sin. Visions and ideals.

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